The triumph of the symbol: Pictorial representation of deities in Mesopotamia and the biblical image ban

Ornan, Tallay

Abstract: This book analyzes the history of Mesopotamian imagery from the mid-second to mid-first millennium BCE. It demonstrates that in spite of rich textual evidence, which grants the Mesopotamian gods and goddesses an anthropomorphic form, there was a clear abstention in various media from visualizing the gods in such a form. True, divine human-shaped cultic images existed in Mesopotamian temples. But as a rule, non-anthropomorphic visual agents such as inanimate objects, animals or fantastic hybrids replaced these figures when they were portrayed outside of their sacred enclosures. This tendency reached its peak in first-millennium Babylonia and Assyria. The removal of the Mesopotamian human-shaped deity from pictorial renderings resembles the Biblical agenda not only in its avoidance of displaying a divine image but also in the implied dual perception of the divine: according to the Bible and the Assyro-Babylonian concept the divine was conceived as having a human form; yet in both cases anthropomorphism was also concealed or rejected, though to a different degree. In the present book, this dual approach toward the divine image is considered as a reflection of two associated rather than contradictory religious worldviews. The plausible consolidation of the relevant Biblical accounts just before the Babylonian Exile or, more probably within the Exile - in both cases during a period of strong Assyrian and Babylonian hegemony - points to a direct correspondence between comparable religious phenomena. It is suggested that far from their homeland and in the absence of a temple for their god, the Judahite deportees adopted and intensified the Mesopotamian avoidance of anthropomorphic pictorial portrayals of deities. While the Babylonian representations remained confined to temples, the exiles would have turned a cultic reality - i.e., the non-written Babylonian custom - into a written, articulated law that explicitly forbade the pictorial representation of God.

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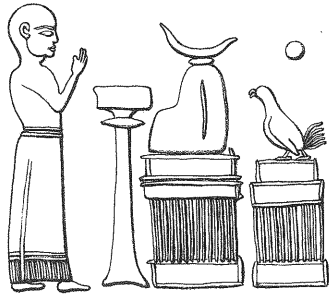
Tallay Ornan

The Triumph of the Symbol

Pictorial Representation of Deities in Mesopotamia and the Biblical Image Ban



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Jerusalem, 2005

SELECTED LIST OF KINGS

Kings of Babylonia	Second Millennium BCE
Burnaburiash II	1359–1333 BCE
Kara-hardash	1333
Kurigalzu II	1332–1308
Nazi-Maruttash	1307–1282
Meli-Shipak	1186–1172
Marduk-apla-iddina I	1171–1159
Nebuchadnezzar I	1125–1104
Enlil-nādin-apli	1103–1100
Marduk-nādin-aḫḫe I	1099–1082

Kings of Babylonia	First Millennium BCE
Nabu-apla-iddina II	887–855 BCE
Nabu-šuma-iškun	*ca.* 760
Nabopolassar	625–605
Nebuchadnezzar II	604–562
Nergal-šar-uṣur (Neriglissar)	559–556
Nabonidus	556–539

Kings of Assyria	Second Millennium BCE
Ashur-uballit I	1363–1328 BCE
Shalmaneser I	1273–1244
Tukulti-Ninurta I	1243–1207
Tiglath-pileser I	1114–1076
Ashur-Bel-kala	1073–1056
Ashurnasirpal I	1049–1031

Kings of Assyria	First Millennium BCE
Tukulti Ninurta II	890–884 BCE
Ashurnasirpal II	883–859
Shalmaneser III	858–824
Shamshi-Adad V	823–811
Adad-nirari III	810–783
Shalmenesr IV	782–773
Tiglath-pileser III	744–727
Sargon II	721–705
Sennacherib	704–681
Esarhaddon	680–669
Ashurbanipal	668–627
Šamaš-šum-ukin II	667–648

INTRODUCTION

This study aims at investigating modes of divine representations in the ancient art of Mesopotamia, from the second half of the second millennium and in particular through first-millennium visual evidence. By illuminating a dominant tendency of Mesopotamian art at that time to avoid human-shaped renderings of deities, I hope to shed light on a possible Mesopotamian inspiration for the articulation of the biblical image ban.

The impetus for such a search lies in the challenge raised by the biblical narrative, which is traditionally conceived of as drastically opposing other ancient Near Eastern conventions of representing divine images. Nevertheless, being one of the cultures developed within the framework of the ancient Near East, although in its later phase, the Israelite attitude toward the divine form should be reexamined, first of all, by studying it against the background of its environment and according to rules applicable to the rest of the ancient Near East. The distinctiveness and uniqueness of Israelite approach to the divine image can thus only be comprehended after a delineation of its similarities with other Near Eastern phenomena. The reason for focusing on Mesopotamian art in general and on its first-millennium imagery in particular stems from historical events that bond Israelite and Assyro-Babylonian phenomena in the middle of the first millennium BCE. These include the Assyro-Babylonian conquest of Israel and Judah and the mass deportations and resettling of elite segments of the population of these two small kingdoms in Mesopotamia.

Since the ancient Israelite notion of the pictorial rendering of the divine, as conveyed through the biblical narrative, emerged in this period and was articulated late during the Babylonian exile, a thorough study of first-millennium Mesopotamian imagery is necessary in order to illustrate the context of the Israelite perception. An examination of the Mesopotamian evidence from this angle may provide us with insights into the development of the Israelite perception of the divine image.

A comparison of aspects of Mesopotamian imagery with the biblical approach of divine representation gives rise to some

difficulties. It juxtaposes material gathered from visual data with information based entirely on textual evidence. It in fact brings together a text that ostensibly rejects the power of imagery with a pictorial tradition, which by its very nature testifies to a strong recognition of the power of images.[1] Nevertheless, such a comparison seems to be in order because the divine was basically conceived of as having a human form, both in the Bible and in Mesopotamia.[2]

The need to expose Mesopotamian imagery in relation to the Israelite phenomenon is appealing not only because in both cultural expressions the divine was conceptualized in human form, but also because in both cases a rejection or an abstention from divine anthropomorphism is revealed. Furthermore, the historical framework which brought these two cultures into close ties from the last quarter of the eighth century until well after the fall of Babylon in 539 BCE justifies the quest for a Mesopotamian background for some of the biblical notions. Such a quest was emerging during the early stages of Assyriology, in particular since 1872, when George Smith shocked western public opinion by identifying the eleventh tablet of the Epic of Gilgamesh as a forerunner of the biblical story of the flood. Since then the pendulum has been swinging between two poles: either denying connections between ancient Israelite and Mesopotamian world views or totally accepting such ties. The dilemma embedded in this relationship is perhaps epitomized by the question whether we are dealing with the Bible and the ancient Near East or with the Bible within the ancient Near East.[3] The issue of biblical dependence on the Assyro-Babylonian civilization remains a most prominent topic in current academic discourse, as is well exemplified by the intriguing issues raised by Simo Parpola and the various discussions they

1 On the vital role of images as indicated by Mesopotamian texts elaborating on the visuality of Mesopotamian works of art, see Winter 2000c.

2 DDD, "god"; Kaufmann 1972, 226–231; 1977, 236–237; Bottéro 2001, 58–77; Renger 1980–83, 309, 312–313. For a survey of anthropomorphic and non-anthropomorphic ancient Near Eastern pictorial representations, see Cornelius 1997.

3 Machinist 1991; cf. Hallo 1997, xxiii–xviii.

aroused.[4] The links suggested here between the Mesopotamian visual material and biblical notions may, I hope, contribute to our understanding of the cultural and historical underpinnings of the ties between ancient Israel and Mesopotamia.

Monumental and Miniature Art: Wall and Rock Reliefs, Stelae and Glyptics

The merit in focusing on the art of Mesopotamia is reinforced by the fact that it is Mesopotamian imagery that provides us with rich, diverse and above all consecutive visual data, lasting for over three millennia. Such a long, multi-faceted iconographical tradition may help to illustrate its typical characteristics, its main tendencies and possibly its cognitive environment. Moreover, as literacy is already attested in Mesopotamia since the late fourth and early third millennia, some correlation between picture and legend in terms of divine representation may be traced perhaps more easily than in the case of other ancient civilizations of western Asia. The emphasis on Mesopotamian records is especially inviting for this study because, as will be shown, a refrain from divine anthropomorphic depictions is evident in first-millennium Mesopotamian art. Hence, most of the following discussion will focus on first-millennium material.

The available first-millennium Mesopotamian material includes both monumental and miniature art. However, whereas monumental renderings—mostly wall decoration, rock reliefs and stelae—reflect official iconography, miniature art—consisting mainly of glyptic finds—manifest not only official, but also more popular, artistic trends. A comparison of the iconographic themes of these two primary sources is essential for evaluating the messages conveyed through contemporary iconography.

In contrast to abundance of wall reliefs surviving from Neo-Assyrian palaces, very little is known of contemporary temple decoration. Thus, when studying monumental imagery, one usually

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4 Parpola 1993; Cooper 2000; Pongratz-Leisten 2003 (with a history of research concerning the relations between the biblical and Mesopotamian notions of monotheism). Parpola 2003, 104–103.

deals with themes used by official royal imagery, in which the ruler or his deeds are the main subject matter. When religious or mythical themes are rendered on these monuments, they are usually shown within apotropaic compositions, focused primarily on the royal figure.

A consideration of the first-millennium themes conveyed through imagery requires, then, some parallelism between monumental and miniature art, the latter best attested by seals and seal impressions. The merit of Mesopotamian glyptic imagery for tracing religious concepts lies in the rich and diverse body of material and the numerous examples available to us through seals and sealings. As an age-old genre of artifacts, attested from the sixth millennium onward, the huge body of seals reflects iconographical evidence of well-rooted and widespread traditions, from which we may reconstruct religious notions. Reconstructing religion through glyptic iconography was a method considered in the many publications of the Fribourg School, in studying the history of religion of Israel/Palestine.[5]

The vast body of Neo-Assyrian, Neo-Babylonian and Late Babylonian[6] cylinder and stamp seals is commonly classified according to style, following the methods initiated by scholars working in the first half of the last century. For example, in the publication of the Pierpont Morgan Library Collection at New York, Edith Porada divided the Neo-Assyrian, Neo-Babylonian and Late Babylonian glyptic material into four stylistic groups, termed linear, drilled, cut and modelled.[7] Her application of this method—a method also used here—enabled a systematic classification, providing the means for a better dating of the seals. However, it did not clarify the thematic subject matters of the seals and hence did not reveal their message. Thus, the correspondence of first-millennium Mesopotamian glyptics to other media of contemporary imagery in general and that of monumental art in particular has not yet been fully delineated.

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5 E.g., Keel and Uehlinger 1998.

6 The term "Neo-Babylonian" is used here for first-millennium Babylonia until the last quarter of the seventh century and the term "Late Babylonian" from the reign of Nabopolassar (626–605) to Nabonidus (555–539), the last Babylonian king.

7 Porada 1948, 71–100.

A thematic classification of first-millennium Mesopotamian glyptics was suggested by Suzanne Herbordt, who focused on eighth–seventh-century impressions of Neo-Assyrian cylinder and stamp seals.[8] The Neo-Assyrian cylinder seals were divided by Suzanne Herbordt into five groups: devotional scenes; combat and hunting representations; chariot combat and hunting representations; siege depictions; and animals and hybrid creatures. Contemporary stamp seals were divided by Herbordt into 11 groups of iconographical subjects. While her classification in these many thematic groups indeed encompasses the visual repertoire of Neo-Assyrian glyptics, it seems to be somewhat unwieldy. In addition, like the above stylistic classification it does not provide a common denominator for both cylinder and stamp seals and does not afford a comprehensive view of the content(s) conveyed in first-millennium Mesopotamian glyptic art. The correspondence between Assyrian monumental and glyptic imagery has been dealt with by Irene Winter, through a consideration of subject matters such as the king's fight with the lion, royal worship, the hunt, the siege, "the king with bow and cup", figures flanking a tree, and scenes of cultic devotion.[9]

The glyptic classification underlying the present work attempts to clarify main subject matters of both cylinder seals and stamp seals of first-millennium Mesopotamia. This classification distinguishes between imaginative and realistic themes, a differentiation which no doubt did not occupy the ancient artisan or his customer and is based purely on a modern approach. Nevertheless, such a classification may shed light on divine representations conveyed through glyptic art and may provide the means to compare it with monumental art in order to gain an insight into divine portrayals in first-millennium Mesopotamia. Accordingly, Neo-Assyrian, Neo-Babylonian and Late Babylonian cylinder and stamp seals may be divided into four main groups, in which various degrees of imaginative and realistic themes are manifested.

The first group consists of seals depicting supernatural compositions with no mortals, including human-shaped divine figures

8 Herbordt 1992.

9 Winter 2000b.

and floral motifs, animals and hybrid creatures—all standing for divine entities. This theme is represented in all the stylistic glyptic groups of first-millennium Mesopotamian seals.[10]

The second group is also typified by supernatural themes; here they are conveyed through scenes of contest only.[11] The group differs from the previous one in that a gesturing mortal worshipper at times accompanies the contest, thus signifying it as a focus of divine veneration.[12] Although both the protagonists and the rivals in these scenes are represented realistically, the very choice of the contest theme highlights the fantastic non-realistic character of the seals of this group.[13] The contest theme is depicted mainly on seals worked in the cut and modelled styles and is less common on stamp seals.

In the third group, consisting of devotional scenes with encounters between divine and earthly images, the combination of fantastic and realistic features is especially evident. The realistic aspect of the seals assigned to this group is conveyed through the image of the mortal worshipper, who gestures in front of anthropomorphic deities or divine emblems. The meaning of the scene in general with regard to realistic vs. non-realistic depiction is, however, problematic. It is not always clear whether they depict a supernatural occurrence, an actual worship carried out in a temple or perhaps a combination of both. The devotional scene depicted on Assyrian seals differs from that rendered on Babylonian seals. While on the former the divine is usually represented by his or her anthropomorphic portrayal,[14] on Late Babylonian seals divinities are usually represented by symbols.[15] A

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10 E.g., our figs. 72, 73, 75, 76, 121, 126, 127, 147, 152, 155, 156, 205, 206, 214, 219.

11 E.g., our figs. 78–81, 138, 139, 141, 161.

12 E.g., our figs. 128, 142, 143.

13 The clay bullae depicting the Assyrian king fighting a lion stamped by Assyrian state seals (Sachs 1953; Maul 1995; Winter 2000b, 54–60) also combine realistic features—the figures of the king and the lion—with a non-realistic occurrence. However, as the theme of these sealings does not allude to divinities, its relation to the Second Group is problematic.

14 E.g., our figs. 122, 124, 125, 129, 130, 134, 140, 162, 208, 216, 217, 218 (cf. stamp seal 123 and impression 132).

15 E.g., our figs. 153–160, 163, 164, 166–169.

tendency for symbolic articulation of the divine was evident in Neo-Assyrian glyptic imagery at the end of the eighth century,[16] preceding the peak of symbolic renderings in Late Babylonian glyptic. Worship of anthropomorphic deities is common on ninth–eighth-century drill-style seals, whereas gesturing in front of divine emblems is apparent on modelled and late-drill Late Babylonian seals of the seventh–fifth centuries.

The fourth thematic group of first-millennium Mesopotamian seals consists of more realistic representations characterized by figures associated with kings, sieges and chariots, in which fantastic elements, including divine representations—anthropomorphic or non-anthropomorphic—play a minor or secondary role, if any. These representations appear on Neo-Assyrian cylinder seals worked in linear style. The realistic subject matters selected for the representations of the fourth group emphasize the innovative character of Neo-Assyrian miniature imagery, as traditionally Mesopotamian glyptic art focused on non-realistic visual depictions. Some of these realistic Neo-Assyrian themes match contemporary Neo-Assyrian monumental representations, in which a visual realistic approach became the norm.[17] This correspondence between realistic depictions conveyed on cylinder seals of the fourth group and similar scenes rendered on Neo-Assyrian wall reliefs highlights the uniqueness of Neo-Assyrian art, which, apparently for the first time in antiquity, related to reality in conscious and systematic methods.[18]

The Contribution of Pictorial Depictions to Decoding the Ancient Mind

Pictorial renderings in ancient art are part of a broader range of finds classified as "material remains". The contribution of material remains in general and of visual imagery in particular to the understanding of

16 The Assyrian theme depicting devotion of divine emblems includes veneration of stylized trees, attested as early as the ninth century, e.g. our figs. 133, 137, 204, 207, 212 (cf. Winter 2000b, 65–68).

17 Winter 2000b, 64–65; Collon 2001, 59, 65.

18 Groenewgen-Frankfort 1987, 170–181.

the beliefs and mind of the ancients has been recognized in the last two decades, often within the framework of "cognitive archaeology".[19] This branch of archaeology, applied mainly to the study of illiterate societies, coincides with an increased recognition of the role of pictorial expression in literate societies as well, especially in revealing religious messages. Thus, Kippenberg states: "As literary genres determine the meaning of religious notions so do visual genres. But these last ones are much more popular and widespread. If we wish to reconstruct the native understanding of tradition we need this additional source".[20] Van der Toorn writes: "... that images often have an impact beyond that of words, the iconography in this context, can no longer be dismissed as a series of images in the margins of the written word. The image has been recognized as an independent message. It is no longer inferior to the text, and may under certain circumstances take precedence".[21] Similarly, Schmidt refers to the equal weight of text and picture, when analysed from a semiotic point of view: "Against the long held notion that the word is an advance over the image is the argument from general semiotics that although verbal and visual representation do differ as forms of medium, they do not differ essentially from a semantic point of view, for so-called speech acts are not medium specific."[22]

As this study is based on pictorial data, some reflections on the role of ancient art and its bearing on the understanding of cultural issues are in order. Visual art in the ancient world was not generally meant to please or to decorate. The aesthetic value of art, as comprehended by modern western onlookers, had no primary role within the ancient context. The western approach, which distinguishes between fine art as a product made for its own sake and applied art, is highly problematic, to say the least, when considering ancient Near Eastern art.[23] Pictorial renderings in antiquity did not convey the mind, emotions, creativity, or unconscious reflections of an individual

19 Renfrew and Bahn 1998, 369–402.

20 Kippenberg 1985–86, vii–x. See also Keel 1992, xi–xiv.

21 Van der Toorn 1997b, 16.

22 Schmidt 1996, 77.

23 Winter 1995, 2569.

artisan, but rather transmitted the shared ideology of a community. Ancient art was first and foremost a form of magic-religious expression serving the needs of a religion,[24] bound with those of the ruling elite and the sovereign, who was regarded as elected to office by the divine. Thus, decoding ancient visual representations may help to reveal religious perceptions.

The products of ancient Near Eastern art, such as sculptures, reliefs, seals and paintings on pottery vessels, had a well-defined role and a specific place in worship and in protecting humans from various dangers. For example, the role of a god's statue—the embodiment which was the outcome of the mouth-opening and mouth-washing rites within the temple—was to perpetuate divine presence in his earthly abode. Alternatively, the role of a worshipper's statue in a temple was to represent him or her constantly before the god in a quest for protection.[25] In these cases, the sculptor was not free to create any image he wished. Just as there were definite rules and sanctioned customs governing access to a shrine—what one might wear, how one should behave, and so forth, neither divine nor mortal images could be made according to the will, skill, or whim of an individual artisan. The latter was bound by fixed rules, which were in fact part of worship. Like a scribe composing a hymn to the god, who had to follow accepted, known, ancient, even rigid rules, the artist fashioned the god's image through his likeness or emblem for a temple according to known, prescribed formulas. Consequently, characteristics of art valued by modern onlookers, such as change, innovation, expressiveness and creativity, were probably not appreciated by the ancient beholders. On the contrary, an artisan who would fashion the god's image or even his accessories in a new form or shape, unknown in previous renderings, would be considered as having committed a cultic offense—not unlike a scribe making a sudden, unexplained alteration in the words of a prayer. This is well exemplified by the Verse Account, in which Nabonidus, the last Babylonian king, was blamed for introducing new, even "revolutionary" visual features for embellishing the new image of

24 Winter 1995, 2579.

25 Renger 1980–83, 313–314; Winter 1992, 15.

Sin.[26] The ancient artist adhered to old, known rules, consecrated through centuries of use, and did not follow his own inclination or fancy.

Since the visual articulation was primarily a form of religious expression, it may be a highly useful primary source, alongside the written source, in the study of religion in general and of the perception of the divine form in particular. The fact that most people in the ancient Near East were a-literate and only limited circles of scribes could read and write further enhances the role of visual representations for the decoding of the religious ideas of the ancients.

The built-in conservatism of ancient works of art[27] offers the modern scholar a tremendous advantage. First, by applying the rules of reading ancient imagery one may decipher, complete and comprehend fragmentary ancient finds. Second, thanks to the conservative nature of ancient art, one may apply conclusions from early findings to later ones, and vice versa.

The Incongruity of Text and Picture

There are, however, several difficulties in applying visual expressions for understanding the nature of ancient religion in general and divine images in particular in reading ancient Near Eastern imagery. First, unlike visual expressions in ancient Egypt or Greece, artistic representations in the Near East were not generally accompanied by corresponding texts. Moreover, in cases when accompanied by an inscription, there is usually no self-evident relationship between the two aspects. Only in a relatively late phase of the art history of Mesopotamia, from the later part of the eighth century onwards, do we find a non-sporadic, conscious and intentional labeling of a visual display. To the modern onlooker it may in fact appear at times as if there is no connection between the picture and inscription on the same object. A well-known example of this phenomenon is apparent in the case of ninth-century Assyrian royal inscriptions inscribed on palatial walls; the inscriptions do not refer to the stylized trees engraved on

26 Lee 1993, 131.

27 Winter 1995, 2579.

these walls. Although the written and pictorial expressions were products of the same civilization, they did not necessarily have the same referent or convey the same message. It is sometimes extremely difficult to correlate the two modes of expression—as if visual and written modes developed along parallel, but not identical, venues in Mesopotamia and other areas of the ancient Near East.

The code represented by an ancient picture must often, then, be deciphered according to its own rules. Only after some understanding of the pictorial components and structure is attained should it be examined against its broader archaeological, textual, cultural and sociological context. Although text and picture are different, the decoding of the picture often recalls the decipherment of an inscription. By dividing the picture into its components, understanding each component on its own, tracing its history and studying individual parallels, and only afterwards encoding the composition—the pictorial syntax—one may obtain information and insights that clarify the whole. Although we have ample textual references to divine Mesopotamian images, I would argue, using Renfrew's observation, that it is not only in the absence of written testimony that "we must work with materials where the meaning has been made explicit with signs, symbols and iconography"[28] in order to gain a deeper insight into the mental world of the ancients. Thus, when studying the manner in which gods and goddesses were perceived in Mesopotamia, it seems appropriate to deal initially with the visual records. This is the task undertaken by the present contribution.

The divergence between text and visual representation in Mesopotamia has, of course, a deeper reason, bound to the basic difference between word and picture. As two separate vehicles of communication the written and visual modes differ in the very nature of their transmission and in the ways they are grasped by their audience: reader, listener and beholder. Whereas the text, for example, is a time-sequential mode of expression, the picture is a simultaneously-event means of recording. As expressed by Suter: "Before and after being "sent" through the channel, the message is transferred from one system of symbols to another. This encoding is

28 Renfrew 1985, 13.

vital, and entails a main difference between written and pictorial expressions."[29]

Indeed, the picture sometimes has to modify the structure, details and emphasis of the verbal theme in order to transmit a similar message. The depiction of the measuring rod and the rope as royal attributes in Mesopotamian imagery may exemplify such a case.[30] The measuring rod and the rope were, according to texts, among the five royal insignia granted to the Mesopotamian kings by the gods. Why, then, is it the deity, and not the king, who holds the measuring rod and the rope in pictorial renderings? The explanation to this divergence between picture and text lies in the transmission of the message from one mode of expression to another: from the time-sequential verbal expression to the simultaneous-event recording of the picture. In order to maintain the notion of the text and to accentuate the fact that the attributes were indeed a divine gift, the picture has to show the royal attributes carried by the god and not by the king.

A marked incongruity between text and picture is in fact an inevitable conclusion emerging from the present study. While most of the known pictorial depictions of major deities from the mid-second millennium onwards are rendered in a non-anthropomorphic mode, numerous written references from Mesopotamia describe the gods and goddesses with human behavior and form. Such an inconsistency between text and image should, in my opinion, be welcomed by modern scholarship, since it may highlight the multi-faceted, at times contradictory, aspects embedded in the reconstruction of any cultural phenomenon—in particular when dealing with such a complex issue as the relations of humans with the most holy and sublime ones.

The Perceived Image of the Gods

When considering the messages of ancient Near Eastern pictorial renderings, the manner in which the ancients imagined their gods is of

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29 Suter 2000, 2.

30 Suter 2000, 7 (with bibliography). For the measuring rod and the rope carried by a goddess with no royal figure on the Burney Relief, see Curtis and Collon 1996 (with previous bibliography).

particular interest. The inhabitants of Mesopotamia imagined their gods in human form. Similar perceptions were most probably common in other ancient cultures of the Near East, including Egypt,[31] although they could be differently articulated. The same attitude towards the divine image is well demonstrated in biblical literature.

The formal visual similarity between gods and humans further complicates modern efforts to comprehend the picture. The modern observer is not only unable to identify which gods are being depicted, but at times is even unable to distinguish between gods and mortals. Some difficulty in this respect was possibly experienced by the ancients as well; thus, in order to set divine figures apart from those of human beings, the former were depicted, mainly in Mesopotamia, with one or more pairs of horns on their heads, both in pictorial and textual representations. But even this rule was not always meticulously observed, and gods are sometimes shown without a horned headdress or any other indicating attribute. In such cases, the figure is defined as representing a deity by other methods, as is evident from an analysis of the pictorial context of the figure: its formal role within this scene and its relation to the other depicted figures or elements. The recognition of the figure as a deity also relies on other indications: for example, unrealistic depictions such as winged figures, and images mounted on animals and fantastic hybrids or fighting with them, scenes which, in Mesopotamian imagery, usually signified supernatural divine images.

As demonstrated throughout this book, the perception of the divine as having human form was dominant in the Mesopotamian cognition; and it most probably was a human-shaped image that was the prevailing focus of cult in Mesopotamian shrines. However, not only are non-anthropomorphic cult images also documented in textual evidence,[32] but the present contribution shows that in certain periods divine non-anthropomorphic representations became the norm in Mesopotamian imagery. Hence, in order to study the correspondence between anthropomorphic and non-anthropomorphic renderings of the

31 For the anthropomorphic behavior and form of Egyptian deities, see Silverman 1995, 13–23, 28–30.

32 Renger 1980–83, 309; Seidl 1980–83, 317–318.

divine in a specific period, the following discussions deal with both modes of divine representations. This division enables a diachronic examination of divine representations and may accentuate specific issues, such as which of the Mesopotamian deities were more commonly displayed in human form and which were usually represented in non-human form. Indeed, an examination of both modes of divine representation reveals that generally speaking, from the mid-second millennium only secondary deities were rendered anthropomorphically in Mesopotamian visual display.[33] Accordingly, this book is divided into discussions of anthropomorphic and non-anthropomorphic representations, beginning in the second half of the second millennium and progressing in time until the middle of the first millennium.

The Order of the Chapters

Chapter 1 deals with Middle Babylonian and Middle Assyrian works of art, including statues, reliefs, architectural decoration, stone vessels and cylinder seals, on which human-shaped deities are shown. It seems that the cylinder seals dated to this period display a wider repertoire of godly images than other media. Some of the godly images appearing on Middle Assyrian artifacts may have been inspired by territories west of the Euphrates, where traditions of human-shaped deities were well known.

Non-anthropomorphic Middle Babylonian and Middle Assyrian divine representations from the same periods are discussed in Chapter 2. The chapter deals with the most prolific symbolic representations of deities manifested on *kudurrus*. An inclination to favor emblematic depictions of the divine is also manifested on Middle Babylonian cylinder seals. In some of its sub-groups, however, Middle Babylonian glyptics also maintained the pictorial tradition of depicting gods in human form. This inconsistency between glyptics and other media of art, apparent in the first millennium too, may echo the distinction between the imagery of an age-old genre of artifacts with a newly-introduced type of art. Whereas it was probably more difficult to adopt

33 Seidl 1980–83, 314.

new themes in the traditional craft of seal cutting, it is likely to have been easier to display innovative themes on the new second-millennium medium of *kudurrus*.

The next four chapters deal with anthropomorphic and non-anthropomorphic divine representations dating from the first millennium. Chapter 3 brings the few extant large and small Babylonian artifacts—indeed a small yield—dating from the ninth to the sixth centuries, on which anthropomorphic images of deities are shown. As concluded in this chapter, in spite of the paucity of objects depicting major human-shaped deities, major human-shaped gods and goddesses were used in Mesopotamian temples as foci of cult. It is argued that only when the images of these deities were represented beyond their abode—outside of the temple—was their image transformed into a non-anthropomorphic visual metaphor.

Chapter 4 deals with Neo-Assyrian portrayals of deities in human form. It shows that the representations of major anthropomorphic gods and goddess do not occur in Assyrian palaces. The occasional depictions of such images in palatial decoration are very small and are not shown for their own merit. It is of interest to note that non-anthropomorphic depictions of the divine also rarely appear on Assyrian wall reliefs. This "expulsion" of the images of major deities from Assyrian palaces was probably intended to exalt the king. By removing prominent gods and goddesses from palatial decoration, competition between god and king for the eye of the beholder was prevented and the latter became the only protagonist. An exception is evident during the reign of Sennacherib. In contrast to monuments from the times of other Assyrian kings, some monuments dating from the reign of this king do portray major Assyrian deities in human form. It is suggested that monuments located west of the Euphrates, where the anthropomorphic tradition of representing divinities was strong, inspired these anthropomorphic portrayals. The modification of the divine imagery of Sennacherib is to be associated with other artistic innovations that took place under this king, in particular in religious imagery, which was influenced by Babylonian iconography.

Chapters 5 and 6 deal with non-anthropomorphic divine representations in Babylonia and Assyria respectively. Each of these chapters includes a general discussion, as well as discussions dealing

with common divine emblems depicted on seals and sealings. The fact that symbolic representations become increasingly common, ultimately taking the place of anthropomorphic renderings of major deities, is illustrated in Chapter 5 both on monumental works of art, such as *kudurru*s and stelae, and on cylinder and stamp seals, on which such themes became the norm during the seventh to the fifth centuries.

As shown in Chapter 6, the Assyrian tendency to favor non-anthropomorphic divine representations is most evident on royal stelae and rock reliefs. Whereas monumental Assyrian art indeed avoids anthropomorphic renderings of Assyrian gods and goddesses, such portrayals are seen in ninth–eighth-century glyptic art in Assyria. The different background of these two media may explain this discrepancy between major and miniature art with regard to the portrayal of deities. Like the Middle Babylonian phenomenon mentioned above, palatial monumental art was a new mode of pictorial display in which innovative approaches could more easily be accepted, while the age-old medium of seals adhered to traditional conventions. Nevertheless, anthropomorphic renderings of deities were usually replaced by non-anthropomorphic divine images during the last phase of Assyrian glyptics in the seventh century. The strong inclination in Mesopotamian art toward symbolic representation of the divine is well attested in both Assyrian and Babylonian glyptic imagery by the growing number of divine symbols which were shown as foci of cult, in front of which a gesturing worshipper stood. This intensification of divine symbolic renderings is well attested by hybrids, animals, or demons—hitherto shown only as attributes—which now became foci of cult.

The book concludes by juxtaposing the biblical notion of divine portrayal with Mesopotamian notions (Chapter 7). It suggests that although the removal of human-shaped deities from visual renderings was well known in the Levant, including Israel/Palestine, as demonstrated by Mettinger,[34] the articulation of the biblical ban on images followed non-written Assyro-Babylonian concepts that prevailed in first-millennium Mesopotamia.

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34 Mettinger 1995.

Such a suggestion may recall later Jewish phenomena, dated to Second Temple and medieval times, whereby some central Jewish themes were in fact formulated as a response of a minority to beliefs and habits held by the (Christian) majority. A well-known example shedding light on such a mechanism is the removal of Moses from the Haggadah, the tale of Exodus read aloud on Passover. This removal, which stands in contrast to his prominent role in the biblical narrative, was aimed at preventing the exaltation of Moses in the same vein as Christ.[35]

One may speculate, then, that the reconstruction suggested here—whereby the minority of Judahite exiles in Babylonia were inspired by a common habit prevalent in their environment and that they intensified it in order to adapt it to their own needs—may have set a pattern for future Jewish cultural mechanisms, which are beyond the scope of this book.

35 Yuval 2003, 36, 97 and *passim*. Compare the rise of the feminine *Shekhinah*, the Divine Presence, in thirteenth-century CE Kabbalah, regarded as a Jewish response to the revival of twelfth-century Christian worship of Mary (Green 2003).

CHAPTER ONE:

LESSER GODS AND GODDESSES

ANTHROPOMORPHIC REPRESENTATIONS OF DEITIES IN SECOND-MILLENNIUM MESOPOTAMIA

1.1. Anthropomorphic Deities in Middle Babylonian Monuments

In contrast to the wealth of human-shaped deities represented in Old Babylonian imagery, relatively few anthropomorphic divinities were rendered in the second part of the second millennium, during the Middle Babylonian and Middle Assyrian periods.

Elongated human-shaped male and female divine images, made of moulded, burned mudbricks, adorn the façade of the Eanna temple of Inanna at Uruk, built by the Kassite king Karaindash in 1413 BCE (fig. 1). Each of these almost three-dimensional figures stands within a niche and holds a small jar, from which water flows, which may be identified as the *ḫegallu*, "abundance". The male images wear scale-patterned dress, while a schematized design of running water decorates the similarly-shaped dress of the female divinities.[36] The figures represent protective divinities of relatively low status, as indicated by their headdress crowned with one pair of horns and by their position in the outer wall of the Eanna enclosure. Support for this interpretation can be found in later, twelfth-century supernatural figures adorning the outer mudbrick wall of a sacred enclosure at Suse.[37]

A figure of a female deity clad with a flounced garment is depicted on a limestone relief found in the *akītu* house at Uruk. She is portrayed striding to the left, wearing a multi-paired horned mitre and

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36 Jordan 1930, 30–38, pls. 15–16. Compare an Old Babylonian female deity holding a *ḫegallu* vase rendered on a large terracotta plaque (h. 73 cm.) protecting an entrance of a small sanctuary at Ur (Woolley and Mallowan 1976, 173, pl. 64:1) and a decorated mace head from Mari (Alexander 1970).

37 Moortgat 1969, 93–94, pls. 226–228; Ellis 1977, 31–33; *CAD* 6, 168; Harper *et al.* 1992, 141–144.

raising her arms in a gesture of supplication (fig. 2a). The Sumerian dedication inscribed on the goddess's dress mentions that the stela was dedicated to the goddess Inanna for the life of the king Nazi-Maruttash, who ruled in the last quarter of the fourteenth century.[38] The uplifted arms of the figure conveying a gesture of benediction identifies it as the goddess Lama, regarded, since the Ur III period, as a divinity of lesser status, who was often shown intervening between the devotee and his god. The flounced garment, which made its first emergence as a distinctly divine garment in the Akkadian period, reached its high point in the Ur III and Old Babylonian periods was still being worn by this suppliant goddess on early Middle Babylonian seals.[39] Representations of Lama were popular on early Kassite cylinder seals, where the goddess appears at times as the only image on the seal or with another figure.[40] These latter renderings reflect a Middle Babylonian continuation of a common Old Babylonian theme of presentation, in which Lama served as an intermediary figure leading the petitioner in front of a major divinity. However, as the major deity was often missing from Kassite glyptic renderings, it can be argued that at least from a formal, compositional point of view, this minor goddess at times replaced the appearance of a major deity.

An almost identical rendering of Lama, but turning to the right, is found on a similar non-provenanced limestone relief, also inscribed with a Sumerian dedication for the life of Nazi-Maruttash (fig. 2b). As this stela resembles the previously discussed Uruk monument in scale, subject matter, style and inscription, it can be conjectured that it too originated at Uruk. Both monuments can be reconstructed, then, as portrayals of the goddess Lama, flanking a central figure or protecting an entrance, recalling the eighteenth-century mural from Mari.[41] Thus,

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38 Becker 1993, 59, no. 791, pl. 45; Börker-Klähn 1982, no. 118 (fig. 119 *sic*!).

39 Cf. Collon 1987, nos. 104, 107, 119 (Akkadian); 136, 138, 139, 141 (Karum Kanish); 153, 155–157, 166, 181–185 (Old Babylonian); 217–219 (Syrian); 235, 275 (early Kassite).

40 Matthews 1990, pl. II:F, N, P; Collon 1987, nos. 236, 245.

41 Orthmann 1971, pl. 189; Becker 1993, 59, pl. 44; Börker-Klähn 1982, no. 119 (fig. 118 *sic*!). See, however, Braun-Holzinger 1999, 159, n. 87. On Lama and her companion the Udug spirit as protecting images positioned in doorways, see Wiggermann 1985–86.

in spite of their multi-paired horned mitres, these goddesses are to be considered as lesser deities of apotropaic nature.

In accordance with the rare depictions of human-shaped deities in Middle Babylonian monuments, few anthropomorphic divinities are rendered on Kassite stone stelae, *naru* in Akkadian, known in the scholarly literature as *kudurru.* These monuments, regarded as exclusively Babylonian, were used in the Kassite and post-Kassite periods and during the first millennium, from the first half of the fourteenth century until the mid-seventh century. Because most of these monuments were unearthed either in temples in southern Mesopotamia or in a sacred area of Susa, to where they would have been brought as booty, their traditional designation as boundary stones (*kudurrus*) has been challenged. As the majority of the inscriptions on these stelae commemorated royal land grants and many report the acquisition of another source of perpetual income, it has been suggested by Slanski that they were monuments providing assurance of a type of permanent entitlement to be inherited by succeeding generations.[42]

A unique scene representing an enthroned deity, probably a goddess, in front of whom stands a figure carrying a tripartite object, perhaps a lightning bolt, appears on a *kudurru* relief dating from before 1323, at the end of the reign of Kurigalzu II (fig. 3). The theme may have echoed Old Babylonian devotional scenes, for example that of Hammurabi (1792–1750 BCE) standing before Shamash, but the worshipper shown on Old Babylonian glyptic presentation scenes is missing here. Portrayals of veneration of anthropomorphic deities can be traced on two twelfth-century *kudurrus* found at Susa. On the first one, raised arms of a probable deity can be seen on the left, in front of a worshipper (fig. 4); on the second *kudurru* it is an enthroned goddess who receives the standing worshipper. The theme, which with some modifications reflects the Old Babylonian presentation scene consisting of a major deity, a worshipper and an interceding goddess, is shown on two almost identical *kudurrus* of Meli-Shipak, in which the king is shown leading his daughter, Hunnubat-Nanaya, in front of

42 Slanski 2003; Brinkman 1980–83, 269; Seidl 1989, 76, 91.

seated Nanaya (fig. 5).[43] The goddess, larger than the ruler and his daughter, faces right, contrary to the position of most deities portrayed in Old Babylonian presentation scenes. The intermediary figure, leading the devotee before the deity, is the king and not the interceding goddess, and there is a tall censer (*nignakku*) on a high stand placed between the king and the deity, not common on Old Babylonian renderings, but known on Middle Assyrian representations (cf. figs. 21, 26, 27). Other elements shown in these two compositions also differ from those depicted in Old Babylonian examples. The divine throne, adorned with six tree-like tall poles alternating with narrow rectangles, probable remnants of niched Old Babylonian seats, and the low hoof-legged footstool-like furniture, on which the throne and the goddess's feet rest, differ from the brick-like podiums typical of Old Babylonian representations.[44] The wavy tiers of the deity's flounced garment are drawn more diagonally than in Old Babylonian artifacts, and, most notably, the feathered mitre worn by the goddess is a new divine signifier, not used in Old Babylonian times. The presence of these "new" features in a Kassite divine representation may hint at a new standard visual convention of divinities in Middle Babylonian iconography.

However, an examination of other contemporary, human-shaped deities suggests that one cannot speak of a standard norm of divine portrayals at this period. This is apparent, for example, by twelfth-century representations of deities depicted on two monuments discovered at Susa. Although these monuments were reworked in the first millennium, this reworking did not include the divine figures, which remained as they were originally articulated in the twelfth century.[45] The identity of the two gods—one represented enthroned and the other standing—is hard to determine as they hold only a staff and a ring, general markers of authority. Both are clad with the flounced garment in a typical twelfth-century manner, covering two

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43 For the above-mentioned *kudurrus*, see King 1912, pl. 107; Seidl 1989, 19–20 (no. 1), 25 (no. 20), 28, pl. 14b (no. 30), 26 (nos. 23, 24), 198, pl. 11:a,b; Slanski 2003, 42–48, 52.

44 Ornan 2001b, 12, fig. 10 and compare King 1912, pl. 3 (decoration of pedestals on the second register from the bottom).

45 Seidl 1965.

shoulders, and they wear four-paired horned headgear shown in profile, following the model set by the Hammurabi stela. The existence of the horned mitre contemporaneously with the more common, new divine feathered crown in the twelfth century may hint at a non-fixed imagery, which itself may be the outcome of the dearth of divine anthropomorphic representations in Middle Babylonian art. Variants of divine head coverings depicted on other *kudurru*s (figs. 6, 7) may corroborate the above suggestion. The use of the feathered crown itself on Babylonian *kudurru*s supports the somewhat evasive nature of divine pictorial anthropomorphism in late second-millennium Babylonian monumental art, since this type of headdress, first noticed as a godly headgear on monuments attributed to Meli-Shipak, was also used by earthly royal figures. Indeed, the fact that this type of headgear was worn by a monarch already during the early years of Marduk-nādin-aḫḫe I, in the beginning of the eleventh century (e.g., fig. 8),[46] emphasizes the yet undetermined function of the feathered crown. The contemporary iconographical ambiguity of this crown is further evidenced by its depiction on a *kudurru* of Enlil-nadin-apli (fig. 9), where it clearly appears as a divine symbol placed on a pedestal, like other godly emblems rendered on the *kudurru*s and comparable, in particular, to the horned mitres of Anu and Enlil. This double role of the feathered crown within twelfth–eleventh-century Babylonian imagery not only stresses a missing distinct imagery of royal figures, but also sheds light on the lack of a consistent visual tradition for depicting human-shaped divinities.

Another male divinity, holding a vase from which water runs, is shown on a *kudurru* fragment dated to Meli-Shipak; a similar figure is depicted on a later *kudurru* attributed to the second quarter of the twelfth century (figs. 10, 11). By comparison to the late fifteenth-century female and male divinities adorning the Karaindash temple at Uruk, these figures should also be regarded as representing lesser deities conveying abundance, as implied by the *ḫegallu* vessels they carry.[47] The water-pouring deity depicted on the Meli-Shipak *kudurru* is mounted on a beast—an exceptional composition for displaying

46 Seidl 1989, 46–49, 198, nos. 76, 79; for other images of rulers on *kudurru*s, see nos. 27, 81(?), 198.

47 Seidl 1989, 25, no. 22, 41–42, no. 64.

godly figures holding a vase—and may again point to the lack of a consistent iconographical tradition of depicting human-shaped deities in Middle Babylonian times.

Among the infrequent human-shaped deities represented on Middle Babylonian monuments, only few can be specifically identified. One of these is the storm god, identified by the lightning bolt, depicted on the two above-noted *kudurru*s attributed to the reign of Meli-Shipak (figs. 4, 6).[48] As the deity shown on fig. 4 is to be identified with Adad because he stands on a bull, it may be postulated that Adad can also be identified with a figure mounted on a bull rendered on a fragment of a third *kudurru*, also attributed to Meli-Shipak.[49]

The probable identification of Adad with a deity depicted on a *kudurru* found at Nippur, also attributed to Meli-Shipak (fig. 7),[50] is more difficult, since the depiction in this case conveys a resemblance to a portrayal of Marduk. The god in question faces right, trampling underfoot a fantastic animal which is tied by reins held in his left hand, while a scimitar is carried in his right. The god's stance and relationship with the sacred beast, the scimitar, the garment covering both shoulders and the entire composition all closely recall another *kudurru* of Meli-Shipak, where the godly figure is identified as Marduk (see below, discussion of fig. 12). Nevertheless, it is not only the manner in which the god on the Nippur *kudurru* tramples the beast by raising only one foot, a stance which follows earlier Mesopotamian conventions, but it is also the fantastic animal itself—a winged, bird-tailed lion-dragon—that differs from the *mušḫuššu* accompanying Marduk on the *kudurru* illustrated in fig. 12. Representations of the lion-dragon in Akkadian glyptic imagery associate it with the storm deity or his female consort, Shala. The lion-dragon was also connected with Ninurta, probably because the two deities shared some of their characteristics. And although the hybrid was usually replaced by the bull as the sacred animal of Adad as early as the Ur III period and in particular in Old Babylonian times, few Old Babylonian

48 Seidl 1989, 25, nos. 20, 21.

49 Seidl 1989, 25, no. 19, 194, pl. 7b.

50 Seidl 1989, 26, no. 26.

representations of Adad portray him with the lion-dragon,[51] supporting the association of the figure illustrated in fig. 7 with the storm deity. The large lightning bolt, on a small socle in front of the god, may lend further support to this suggestion.

Another deity who may be assigned to the circle of Adad is the standing goddess depicted on an additional *kudurru* of Meli-Shipak (fig. 13).[52] The goddess faces right, wearing a flounced garment and holding an ear of corn, which may identify her as Adad's consort. The rare portrayal of Shala, her unique position in the composition among various symbols and two human-shaped demons, and the lack of any head covering may hint at her relatively low divine status and again shed light on the lack of a stable iconography of anthropomorphic divinities conveyed through *kudurru* reliefs.

As mentioned above, the bearded male deity portrayed on the *kudurru* of Meli-Shipak shown in fig. 12 portrays Marduk, whose identification is confirmed by an inscription.[53] The right-facing god is clad in a long, tiered and flounced garment covering his feet and two shoulders and wears a feathered mitre, the bottom of which is adorned with circles. He wields a scimitar in his right hand and grasps a sceptre club, rested on his chest, in his left. At his side, the forepart of a *mušḫuššu*, his snake-dragon attribute and symbol, which establishes his identity as Marduk, is depicted. Before the divine image is a *marru*, his spade-shaped emblem, and beneath him the lightning bolt, symbol of Adad. A second, presumable representation of Marduk is portrayed on another twelfth-century monument revealed at Susa, inscribed with Akkadian and Elamite inscriptions, whose classification as a *kudurru* is not certain. The figure in question wears a high feathered crown and stands in front of a boat decorated with a protome of the *mušḫuššu* snake-dragon and high spades, which lend support to the identification of the figure as Marduk, engaged here in what seems to be a unique cultic or mythical scene.[54]

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51 Black and Green 1992, 111, fig. 89; Boehmer 1965, no. 373; Collon 1986, nos. 108, 245–251; Klengel and Klengel-Brandt 2002, 9–10, 53–54, pl. 62:2.4.

52 Seidl 1989, 24, no. 12; King 1912, pls. 29:B, 30:C, D.

53 Seidl 1989, 25, no. 25, 121, 195; King 1912, pl. 21.

54 Seidl 1989, 31–32, no. 41; PKG, pl. 192a–b.

The most popular anthropomorphic deity on Middle Babylonian *kudurru* monuments is the healing goddess Gula, shown enthroned or embodied in a bust and often accompanied by the dog, her attribute and symbol (figs. 14, 15). Her appearance on these monuments was probably attested already in the mid-fourteenth century, though she is securely identified by a legend on a twelfth-century *kudurru* of Meli-Shipak (fig. 16). From the end of the twelfth century and into the eleventh century, Gula's anthropomorphic representations become less frequent, and in the course of the first millennium the dog replaces her human form on the *kudurru*s. Some explanation for the many portrayals of Gula on the *kudurru* reliefs may be found in her presumed association with boundaries, shared with her consort Ninurta.[55] These associations, however, do not accord with her location in lower registers of the reliefs, a position that implies that she was regarded as a minor deity, in Middle Babylonian divine imagery. It is the common occurrences of human-shaped Gula in a low-ranking position on the *kudurru*s which further underscores the propensity conveyed on these Babylonian artifacts to reject divine anthropomorphic representation.

As revealed by the above examples and as has been pointed by Seidl, Adad is the most commonly represented god among anthropomorphic male divinities on Babylonian *kudurru*s. His allegedly prominent role among these renderings does not, however, fit the representations of the lightning bolt, when it appears on its own, replacing the deity's human-shaped image, as often portrayed in lower registers of the *kudurru* relief, implying his proportionally low status. Similarly, his anthropomorphic renderings do not accord with the deity's role as conveyed through the *kudurru*s' inscriptions. Moreover, these portrayals stand in contrast with the diminishing frequency of his representation in Mesopotamian art of the second half of the second millennium in Mesopotamia and the still rare representations of his emblem in first-millennium glyptics.[56]

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55 Seidl 1989, 19 (no. 1), 28 (no. 29), 76–77, 86–88, 194–197; Brinkman 1980–83, 274.

56 Vanel 1965; Collon 2001, 13; for portrayals of the storm god carrying a lightning bolt in first-millennium art inspired by Syrian imagery, see Chapter 4, § 4.1.1 and figs. 91, 97a (sixth in the row of deities).

1.2. Anthropomorphic Deities in Middle Babylonian Cylinder Seals

In contrast to the paucity of the depictions of anthropomorphic deities in Middle Babylonian monumental art, such representations are rather common in three of the four stylistic sub-groups which comprise the bulk of Kassite glyptic evidence. Renderings of human-shaped gods are very popular in the First Kassite group, the largest and best distributed group among Kassite cylinder seals, attributed to the fourteenth and early thirteenth century. However, as opposed to cylinder seals of the preceding Old Babylonian period, from which First Kassite is believed to stem, divine iconography of the latter is less defined and self-evident, as attested, for example, by the fewer depictions of deities wearing horned mitres.[57] Identification of divinities on these seals, then, is mainly based on other criteria, such as the context and the definition of the figures confronted with the assumed deity. For example, if before the figure in question there is a kneeling person or a figure folding his arms in a supplication gesture typical of Old Babylonian devotees,[58] it would not be unreasonable to classify the former as a god. In other cases divine classification is obtained by a composition of an enthroned figure surrounded or confronted with divine symbols; at times, although admittedly in only a few examples, a divinity is determined by an attribute, usually a lightning bolt or a scimitar held by the figure.[59]

Anthropomorphic portrayals of deities continue in the Second Kassite group, dating probably from the mid-fourteenth century (overlapping with First Kassite seals) and continuing in the thirteenth century.[60] Similarly to the first group, some of the figures on these seals can also be classified as divinities by their attributes, by their seated stance, by being shown with a kneeling worshipper and by their

57 Matthews 1990, 55–57, nos. 3–7.

58 E.g., *ibid.*, nos. 14–15, 17–22, 28, 33.

59 E.g., *ibid.*, nos. 34–44, 55, 62, 63. For a scimitar and a lightning bolt, see nos. 16, 45, 73–80.

60 *Ibid.*, 63.

tiered flounced garment.[61] The novelty of this group is the introduction of a new composition, which was not connected to the typical Old Babylonian imagery of presentation scene, but was probably inspired by the glyptics of Karum Kanish and Old Syrian iconography.[62] At the centre of this composition is a human-shaped figure, whose head is shown in profile while his body is frontally rendered, infrequently signified as divine by a horned mitre. The divinity of these figures is also implied by their gigantic dimensions and their physical bonds with natural phenomena, such as mountains or water that are integrated with their bodies (figs. 17, 18). These godly figures, described by Porada as dominating heaven and earth, were prefigured by the above-noted male and female lesser deities of the late-fifteenth century temple at Uruk, where they were represented frontally, as befitting their almost three-dimensional articulation (fig. 1). In few compositions of the Second Kassite group this nature-dominating "cosmic" god is displayed as a hero subduing animals.[63]

Human-shaped deities appear to be less common on seals of the Pseudo-Kassite group, regarded as a derivative of First Kassite seals, attributed to the thirteenth and probably the twelfth century, which were usually made of soft stones or composite material. As with the two former groups, identification of deities is determined by the compositional context within which the figure is shown.[64] It is only the seals belonging to the Third Kassite group, also ascribed to the twelfth century, which definitely manifest a significant decline in the display of human-shaped deities. This observation is not surprising since the group is clearly connected, according to Matthews, to the mature Middle Assyrian glyptic style, in which, as discussed below, divine anthropomorphic renderings are not common.[65]

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61 E.g., *ibid.*, nos. 180, 185, 186.

62 Klengel-Brandt 1980; Uehlinger 1997 (with bibliography).

63 Matthews 1990, nos. 129–140, 142, 145–146, 147, 148; Porada 1981, 49–55, nos. 26–28. For the "cosmic" god in the role of a "master of animals", see Matthews 1990, nos. 132, 133.

64 E.g., *ibid.*, nos. 229–231, 242.

65 Matthews 1990, 64–66, 83. Cf., however, Stein 1994b, 165, who maintains that the Third Kassite preceded the mature Assyrian style.

Because most of the divinities portrayed on Kassite cylinder seals lack specific recognized signifiers, a fact that in itself may reflect some weakening of the anthropomorphic artistic tradition, only a few deities, represented by the material gathered by Matthews, can be specifically identified. These include Adad, recognized by his lightning bolt, Lama, a direct descendant of Old Babylonian imagery, also depicted on other Middle Babylonian artifacts as shown above. She is depicted on a few cylinder seals of the First Kassite group wearing a multi-tiered robe and raising both arms in supplication, and at times standing opposite another divinity. An enthroned god wielding an ear of corn, held by a goddess on a *kudurru* noted above (fig. 13), is depicted on very few examples of the First and Second Kassite groups. Another deity is an enthroned figure raising a small vessel, seen on a few seals of the First Kassite group and rarely on Pseudo-Kassite seals.[66]

Many glyptic renderings of deities assigned to the First Kassite group depict a bearded, standing god who holds a scimitar in his downward-extended right hand (e.g., figs. 19, 20).[67] An association with the above-mentioned Middle Babylonian portrayal of Marduk, similarly wielding a scimitar (fig. 12), proposes that the god with the scimitar of these seals could at times be associated with Marduk.[68] Such a postulation may be strengthened by the suggestion that the

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66 Matthews 1990, Adad, enthroned: nos. 16, 45 (First Kassite); Lama: nos. 3, 109 (with a god holding a scimitar), 112; an enthroned god holding an ear of corn: nos. 126, 180(?); a god holding a vessel: nos. 26, 31, 128 and 230, 241(?) (Pseudo-Kassite). The small vessel held by the latter probably cannot be associated with the small vases carried by the guarding deities of the fifteenth-century temple at Uruk or by deities rendered on the above-mentioned *kudurru*s, as they lack the undulating streams of water.

67 Matthews 1990, 73–80, 95(?), 96, 98, 102, 106, 108, 109–110, 112 120(?), 186 (Second Kassite), 227(?) (Third Kassite), 230, 241(?) (Pseudo-Kassite).

68 That the divine figure with the scimitar could also be associated with other gods is attested by several examples, such as the above-discussed deity with a scimitar trampling a lion-dragon who may have represented Adad (fig. 9); Matthews 1990, no. 78, where the god tramples a back-turned headed bird, identified with the Kassite god Ḫarba, who is equated with Enlil or Anu (Seidl 1989, 148; Black and Green 1992, 112); on impressions from Emar where the is associated with Ninurta (Beyer 2001, 206–207).

cross which often accompanies these depictions is a divine symbol alluding to Marduk.[69] The portrayal of Marduk similarly holding a scimitar on a huge ninth-century lapis lazuli cylinder from Babylon (fig. 66, Chapter 3, § 3.2) attests to the continuation of this convention and may reconfirm the above identification of the god.

Another plausible anthropomorphic rendering of Marduk was offered by Porada, who viewed in the "cosmic" figure of the Second Kassite group (figs. 17, 18) a representation of the god, prefiguring his rise in prominence during the reign of Nebuchanezzar I after the fall of the Kassite dynasty in 1155.[70] The cross depicted on the seal illustrated in fig. 17 may indeed support this suggestion. The latter postulation, however, raises some difficulties, as such portrayals of Marduk cannot be paralleled with either earlier or later iconographical traditions. The appearance of the above-mentioned, similarly articulated male and female divinities in the temple at Uruk, considered to be lesser deities due to their repetitive depictions and their location, makes such a suggestion even less plausible. In addition, as previously noted, this type of god was also portrayed on Second Kassite seals as a "master of animals" and since no such specific association, artistic or textual, can as yet be specifically related to Marduk, this postulation should be considered with caution. It should be emphasized, however, that identifying Marduk with the figure holding a scimitar also has its shortcomings, as in the glyptic evidence the god lacks the feathered crown and the snake-dragon which accompany him in his portrayal on the *kudurrus*. Nonetheless, this dissimilarity may reflect the variance apparent between the two types of artifacts and the plausible different sources of miniature and monumental art. Differences between *kudurrus* and Kassite glyptic art are further exemplified by the more common renderings of Adad on the former than on the seals.

The most outstanding and telling distinction between the imagery of the *kudurrus* and that of Kassite glyptic art is the more frequent representations of anthropomorphic deities on seals than on stone

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69 Ehrenberg 2002a, 66–67.

70 Porada 1981, 50 and n. 151 (and see Frankfort 1939, 194). Brinkman 1980–83, 272. The addition of the double-headed eagle, tied by streams of water with the god, may reflect some allusions to the imagery of Ninurta (Annus 2002, 125).

monuments. This contrariety may perhaps be reconciled by the chronological gap existing between the two types of artifacts since, as has been shown, most anthropomorphic renderings appear on seals of the First Kassite in the fourteenth and early thirteenth centuries, while many of the *kudurru*s bearing human-formed deities are from the twelfth–eleventh centuries. However, it seems that this contrast has deeper reasoning reflecting the different history of the two types of media within Mesopotamian iconography. Kassite seals continue an age-old Mesopotamian tradition of seal cutting, which provided a wide-ranging repertoire of motifs. In themes and details they reflect cutting principles that were established in the Ur III and Old Babylonian periods; having begun during the Akkadian period and perhaps earlier, they could only gradually be disconnected from this background. The *kudurru*s on the other hand—not unlike later Assyrian palace wall reliefs—manifest a new medium, which emerged as the result of specific contemporary political needs, a medium on which, one may assume, visual innovations would have been more readily acceptable.

1.3. Anthropomorphic Deities in Middle Assyrian Monuments and Stone Vessels

Divine anthropomorphic portrayals are almost impossible to trace among the few extant remnants of Middle Assyrian art. One example is represented on side A, third register from the top, of the White Obelisk found at Nineveh, whose date is disputed, ranging from Tiglath-pileser I, Ashurnasirpal I, or the early years of Ashurnasirpal II.[71] The deity can be identified as Ishtar because the epigraph labeling the scene mentions the Bit nathi, which formed part of the sacred enclosure of the Ishtar temple at Nineveh.[72] The devotional scene of the enthroned goddess facing right and receiving a smaller figure of a worshipper is shown inside a walled structure built on a hill. It is the larger image of the king standing outside the structure, signified by his tall headdress, which sustains the identification of the smaller worshipper inside the building as the king (fig. 21). Indeed, the single

71 Pittman 1996, 351–353; Roaf 2001, 361 (with bibliography); Russell 2003, 5.

72 Grayson 1991, 254–256 (A.0.101.18).

appearance of a divine figure within the larger composition focusing on royal earthly activities of hunting, military campaigns and reception of tributes, on the one hand, and the lack of any special means emphasizing the divine figure, on the other hand, clearly convey that the main protagonist on the monument is the king and not the divine. This is a notion manifest in and typical of later Neo-Assyrian palatial decoration, in which prominent and major deities are hardly represented (see below, Chapter 4, § 4.1.2).

A unique, almost life-size stone sculpture of a naked woman, found near the Ishtar temple at Nineveh and dated to Aššur-Bel-kala in the second quarter of the eleventh century (fig. 22), poses difficulty as to who was represented by the statue and where one should look for its iconographic sources. The lack of details on the statue and the somewhat schematic modeling were taken as indications that the figure was originally meant to be dressed in magnificent garments, befitting a high-ranking goddess.[73] This could be considered an attractive suggestion since large naked cult statues were not common in ancient Near East imagery and small-scale depictions of "naked" females generally show them clad in elaborate dresses, revealing only selected parts of their bodies. However, such a reconstruction contradicts the detailing of the pubic triangle with "snail" curls and the unique seven-line inscription inscribed on the lower back of the statue, which reports that this sculpture, as well as other ones, were set up by Aššur-Bel-kala "in the provinces, cities and garrisons for titillation", denoting an erotic allure given to the statue, which could probably be attained only if the figure was indeed naked.[74]

A depiction of a semi-nude winged female is rendered on a fourteenth–thirteenth-century gypsum vessel found in tomb 45 at Ashur (fig. 23).[75] The affinity in costume apparent between this figure and that of an ivory figurine of a Hittite goddess, identified with Ishtar-Shaushka, found at her temple at Nuzi,[76] stresses the probable

73 Spycket 1981, 303–305; Collon 1995c, 115–116; Grayson 1991, 108 (A.0.98.9).

74 Bahrani 1996, 12–13.

75 Haller 1954, 140, pl. 32: a, c; Smith 1965, 32; Harper *et al.* 1995, 90, no. 52 (with bibliography).

76 Mellink 1964, 159, 163.

foreign influence on this image. The Egyptianized form of the vessel lends support to its probable foreign origin, perhaps reaching Ashur from areas west of Assyria. A winged, half-clad female figure is usually associated with the Hurrian goddess, known by her epithet Shaushka, "the great one", attested since the Ur III period and equated with Assyrian Ishtar. The goddess, mounted on an ibex, is also depicted on Mitannian cylinder seals.[77]

As the partly-naked, often winged goddess was common outside of Assyria proper in Middle Assyrian times and was still rather popular in these areas in the first millennium (see below, Chapter 4, § 4.2, and figs. 32, 33, 125, 126), it is not inconceivable to view her portrayal in second-millennium Assyria as reflecting Hurrian (and Mitannian) inspiration, although a naked goddess, sometimes winged, identified as the consort of the storm god was known already in Old Akkadian glyptic imagery.[78] In this regard it is noteworthy that indeed, as pointed out by Spycket, the reference to the gods of Amurru at the end of the inscription on the above-discussed stone statue from Nineveh is not in itself enough to suggest a Syrian origin for the sculpture. Yet when combined with indications derived from other artifacts dealt with here, an association of the Nineveh statue with Syria is not improbable, particularly as nowhere else in the inscriptions left by Aššur-Bel-kala does he refer to deities from the West.[79] The probable Syrian influence on Middle Assyrian divine imagery may be sustained by the later stela found at Terqa (Tell Ashara), reflecting Syrian traits both in its iconography and in the theme of its inscription, engraved by Tukulti-Ninurta II (fig. 89).[80]

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77 Danmanville 1962; Mellink 1964, 162–163; DDD 758–259.

78 Uehlinger 1998a, 58.

79 Grayson 1991, 86–112, esp. 94 (no. 3). On stylistic grounds, Spycket (1981, 304) postulated a reference to Middle Babylonian workmanship. See, however, Collon 1995c, 116.

80 Masetti-Rouault 2001, 91, 95–97, 110–114.

1.4. Anthropomorphic Deities in Middle Assyrian Cylinder Seals

Cylinder seals displaying divine anthropomorphic figures are clearly outnumbered when compared with other subject matters prevalent in the Middle Assyrian glyptic repertoire, such as contest scenes, tree-centred compositions or renderings of animal and fantastic creatures, where supernatural entities are usually represented only by demons.[81] An early depiction of a human-shaped deity is already attested during the fourteenth century.[82] A few similar portrayals are dated to the first half of the thirteenth century, including some which are specifically attributed to the reign of Shalmaneser I. In these an unidentified divine figure is usually shown receiving a worshipper while enthroned, and, in rare cases, standing within a sacred structure. These cylinder seals and other related glyptic examples, found in a rather wide international distribution, manifest foreign relations—as evident also in other media of contemporary artifacts discussed above—conveyed in the seals' style and details (e.g., an impression from Emar, fig. 24).[83] Many of the divine portrayals of these cylinder seals are known from seal impressions found at Ashur, where divinities can usually be identified as such by the composition in which they are shown: enthroned and facing a worshipper, at times kneeling; by horned or feathered crowns; by divine symbols; or by their location within a probable sacred structure.[84]

Only a few divinities, depicted on these seals and sealings, can be identified, however, with specific deities either by their attributes or by their mount animals. Thus, a deity wielding a lightning bolt is depicted in three cases. The first of these was rendered on a now lost cylinder seal attributed to Tukulti-Ninurta I by Wiseman, known only by its impression, used by Esarhaddon king of Assyria in the seventh century to seal his Vassal Treaties (Impression C, fig. 25). The second

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81 Moortgat 1942, 82; 1944, 36; Matthews 1990, 106.

82 Beran 1957, 171, fig. 49 and Matthews 1990, 110.

83 Matthews 1990, 106. For the first part of the thirteenth century, see *ibid.*, nos. 479, 502, 503, 504 (sacred structure), 505, 510, for twelfth-century and later examples, nos. 498, 521, 522, (523?), 533, 534, 535; Pittman 1996, 348–349.

84 E.g., Matthews 1990, nos. 502–504, 522, 525.

example is a cylinder found at Tyre, dated by Porada to the same period (fig. 26), and the third is a non-provenanced cylinder seal at the British Museum, assigned by Matthews to the second half of the thirteenth century or later (fig. 27).[85] As the god with the lightning bolt on Impression C is mounted on a lion-dragon and as in Neo-Assyrian imagery Ninurta may be shown carrying a lightning bolt (e.g., fig. 105), it has been suggested by Porada to identify the deity on the Tyre seal as Ninurta as well. However, considering the scarcity of portrayals of a god holding a lightning bolt in Middle Assyrian art, the western find-spot of the Tyre seal, and the Syrian-style long hair of the god, it may be postulated that the very depiction of the god here was inspired by contemporary Hittite or North Syrian imagery, in which representations of anthropomorphic deities were common and where the god with the lightning bolt was usually identified with the storm god. The engraving of the Tyre seal typified only by the slight hollowing out of the stone, resulting in a flat relief, complemented by details indicated only by lines, was, as pointed out by Porada, exceptional among Middle Assyrian seals. According to Matthews, linear glyptic workmanship did not occur before the middle of the eleventh century; hence, a later date for the Tyre seal and a few other similar glyptic finds, including Impression C of The Vassal Treaties of Esarhaddon, should not be ruled out.[86]

The unique style and workmanship of the Tyre seal and its subject matter of a devotee standing before the storm god brings to mind another cylinder seal, which probably originated in the vicinity of mid-Euphrates, although it was found in a *favissa* of a second-century Hellenistic temple at Beer-Sheba, Israel (fig. 28). The seal was classified by Beck as an eighth-century provincial product because of its first-millennium Babylonian features, which were compared with the huge cylinders from Babylon and Susa, as well as with the eighth-century relief of Šamaš-reš-uṣur, originally from mid-Euphrates Suḫu (figs. 64, 66–68). The origin of the seal in this area was further confirmed by its legend, which mentions the god Apla-Adad, who was

85 Wiseman 1958, 19–22; Porada 1978; 1979; Matthews 1990, no. 521. Cf. Watanabe 1985, 387.

86 Ornan 2003a.

worshipped in that area.[87] However, although the name of this divinity is known mainly from later sources, iconographical details of the seal, such as the crossed bands on the worshipper's chest, recall those depicted on probable royal figures on eleventh-century *kudurru*s (e.g., fig. 8), and raise the possibility that the seal could be dated to the end of the second millennium. In favour of this suggestion is the combination of the linear style with a worshipper-and-god scene, which is scarce on ninth–eighth-century seals, while apparent on some examples, discussed above, dated mainly from the twelfth century onwards. Furthermore, the linear workmanship apparent on the seals from Beer-Sheba and Tyre is close to the embroidery of the garments of the above-mentioned *kudurru*s (e.g., fig. 8) and supports an attribution of these seals to the late second millennium.[88] It should also be noted that below the cuneiform line inscribed behind the worshipper on the Beer-Sheba seal there are diagonal hatchlings similar to those of the divine podium, implying that a third figure, probably that of a deity, was originally engraved on the seal and was replaced later by the first-millennium legend. If indeed the seal from Beer-Sheba was a late second-millennium product of the mid-Euphrates area, reworked during the eighth century, the above notion of attributing western inspiration to the Middle Assyrian portrayals of the storm god is corroborated.

Another deity rendered on seals and sealings attributed to the Middle Assyrian period is a warrior goddess standing on a lion, representing Ishtar or Shaushka. Examples are shown on impressions from Ashur, in an archive dated to Tiglath-pileser I, and from Tell Billa, attributed to the same period (figs. 29, 30). Both figures are mounted on lions, suggesting their identification with Ishtar, a possibility confirmed by the Billa impression, on which the goddess holds a short staff terminating with a star. Correspondence between this goddess and the lion was well established in Mesopotamian iconography and is already attested by the statue of Narundi, the Elamite goddess equated with Ishtar, dated to the late third millennium, on which she is surrounded by six lions. The theme is continued in the Old Babylonian period, exemplified in glyptic

87 Derfler 1981; *NEAEHL*, 172–173; Beck 1973; Rainey 1973.

88 Frankfort 1939, 189–190, pl. 32:i; Canby 1971, 31 and n. 2.

evidence, on pottery plaques and on the well-known wall painting from Mari, in which the goddess usually raises one foot on the beast's neck.[89] The manner in which Ishtar stands with both legs above the beast's back on the impressions shown in figs. 29, 30 recalls, however, examples of deities mounted on animals rendered in Old Syrian and Nuzi glyptics, as well as in Hititte art. This way of sporting a figure above an animal became a common trait in the imagery of northern Syria, in regions that were under political Hittite protectorate or cultural influence, as is well manifested in the glyptics of Emar.[90] A similar stance of deities on animals or hybrids, known from Akkadian cylinder seals, reaffirms the continuation of Akkadian traits in Middle Assyrian art through various visual traditions prevalent in northern Mesopotamia and Syria. Thus, although the theme of mounting Ishtar on a lion was known in Mesopotamian imagery since the Akkadian period, its specific rendering on these Middle Assyrian impressions also betrays Syrian and Hurrian inspirations.

The non-Assyrian features of a goddess riding on a lion are notable on a lapis lazuli cylinder seal found at Thebes in Boeotia, Greece, depicting the goddess carrying an axe in a manner typical of a warrior deity (fig. 31). Whether this seal is to be classified as a twelfth-century Assyrian product inspired by western glyptics, as postulated by Matthews, or as a fourteenth-century Assyrianized Mitannian artifact, as suggested by Porada, the crucial point for our concern here is its combination of Assyrian and non-Assyrian elements. These are manifested through Syrian and Hittite features as an angular guilloche framing the seal at its top and bottom; as traces of Shaushka's windswept cloths or hanging tambourine, mingled with Assyrian elements, such as the lion-headed demons and the kneeling atlantid hero with three pairs of curls.[91]

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89 For the sculpture of Narundi, see Spycket 1981, 144–146; Harper *et al.* 1992, 90–91; Collon 1986, 156–158 (with bibliography).

90 For examples in Syrian seals: Porada 1948, nos. 942–943, 967; Nuzi glyptics: Porada 1947, 59–64, nos. 734, 738, 741, 742, 743; in Mitannian glyptic: Beyer 2001, 215, 224–225 (E36, E38), 227 (E41). Hittite tradition: *ibid.*, 45 (A1), 48 (A3), 51 (A6), 52–53 (A7, A8), 55 (A12) ff., and also 37, fig. 9, 44, fig. 17:c (bibliography therein).

91 Porada 1981, 41–43, 46; Matthews 1990, 108–109, no. 495.

The foreign relations manifest in these portrayals of Ishtar and Shaushaka are further enhanced by depictions of another type of a female figure—nude and winged in a frontal display—recalling the deity on the Ashur gypsum vase discussed above, associated with Hurrian Shaushka, which appears in Nuzi and Mitannian glyptics.[92] The figure is represented in the role of "the mistress of animals" on a fourteenth-century seal impression from Ashur, which betrays, once again, some foreign influence in the goddesses' Egptianizing headdress (fig. 32). The theme of the naked winged mistress of animals is also found on a non-provenanced Middle Assyrian cylinder seal, on which Syrian inspiration is conveyed by the divine horns emerging from the goddess's forehead in typical Syrian fashion (fig. 33). It should be noted that the naked winged female may also be understood as representing a benevolent demon rather than a deity, as she is sometimes shown in an atlantid posture, usually reserved for protective hybrids.[93]

A unique depiction of the moon god Sin is found on a reddish chalcedony cylinder seal revealed at Samsat, which was located on the Euphrates in east Anatolia, where a worshipper stands before the god, identified by a crescent moon held in his left hand, who stands in a boat (fig. 34).[94] The seal bears Middle Assyrian characteristics, such as the deity's garment and the hand movement of the worshipper. The arm gesture, in which the worshipper raises his right arm, fist clenched with one finger pointing forward, while his left arm is extended toward the deity with its palm open, is the typical Assyrian gesture of supplication, portrayed in Neo-Assyrian imagery until the reign of Sennacherib. The gesture is referred to in written sources as "pointing a finger" (for the god) *ubana taraṣu*, and was visually depicted, though with some modifications, on the pedestal of Tukulti-

92 Cf. an impression from Ashur, Beran 1957, 198, fig. 101; Barrelet 1955, 242–243, fig. 11; Stein 1988, 175–178, figs. 12–13. The half-nude winged female divinity is already apparent on second-millennium Syrian cylinder seals, where she is sometimes mounted on a bull (cf. Teissier 1996, 58, nos. 39–40, 70, no. 109).

93 Muscarella 1981, 122–123. Matthews 1990, 104 (no. 467).

94 Özgüç 1987, 436–438, fig. 14 (the seal was inscribed with a now almost erased legend).

Ninurta I (below, Chapter 2, fig. 51) and on the above-mentioned impression from Emar, Impression C and the Tyre seal (figs. 24–26). In spite of these Assyrian features, other details, such as the two horns depicted as if emerging from the deity's forehead and not applied to his head-covering as common in Mesopotamian renderings, betray the impact of Syrian imagery.[95] Most significant of these is the portrayal of the god standing within a boat, not known in Mesopotamian iconography before the first millennium, but attested in earlier Cappadocian glyptic finds.[96] Hence, one may suggest a continuation of an early Anatolian theme mingled with contemporary Middle Assyrian affinities revealed on the Samsat cylinder seal, similarly to the depiction of the seal found at Tyre. As shown by Collon, although Sin in a human form first made his appearance in the glyptic art of the Akkadian period, continuing into some Old Babylonian representations, his anthropomorphic renderings were less popular in Babylonia and Assyria, in contrast to Syria, where he was shown enthroned already on a mural from Mari, dated to the *šakkanakku* period at the close of the third millennium. This anthropomorphic form of the deity is well documented in various Syrian glyptic examples of the first half of the second millennium, culminating in Hittite renderings of the god as attested at Yazilikaya and continuing in first-millennium Syrian monumental depictions of the god.[97]

Another depiction of an anthropomorphic deity is exemplified on a non-provenanced cylinder seal in the Ashmolean Museum, assigned to Shalmaneser I (fig. 35). The seal exhibits a combination of Middle Assyrian workmanship, reflected by the striding bull and its details, with a portrayal of a mountain god known in Middle Babylonian glyptics.[98] The two flowering branches shown as if emerging from the god's shoulders recall that of the frontally displayed mountain god on the Well Relief from Ashur (fig. 36), redated by Klengel to the Old Babylonian period, and a hemaetite Middle Bronze Syrian cylinder seal, in which the mountain god, lacking a horned mitre, stands behind

95 E.g., the Baal stela from Ugarit, Yon 1991, 297, figs. 6a, 11 (and also 18a).

96 Collon 1992, 23, fig. 7; Özgüç and Tunca 2001, 180, 214, pls. 17 (cs 103), 26 (cs 148).

97 Collon 1992, 22–27, figs. 1–18.

98 Moorey and Gurney 1978, 50, no. 38. Matthews 1990, no. 339.

an enthroned major god who receives a procession of four deities.[99] A similar figure, lacking the branches but tied to streams of water flowing from upper down-turned vessels into two lower ones, is represented on ivory inlays found not far from the "New Palace" of Tukulti-Ninurta I at Ashur.[100] The combination of a mountain god, wavy streams of water and flowing vases rendered in these inlays is reproduced not only on the Ashur Well Relief, but also on the above-noted Middle Babylonian cylinder seals and the façade of the Karaindash temple at Uruk (figs. 1, 17, 18).

This type of divine image exemplifies a specific kind of godly representation, in which a recession in the anthropomorphism of the divine is conveyed by displaying non-anthropomorphic features as organic parts of a human-shaped deity. These non-anthropomorphic elements may represent natural phenomena, theriomorphic components, or inanimate objects and are often fused together with the humanized body of the divine into one visual icon. A common variant of these partially anthropomorphic renderings is the combination with elements representing mountains and streams of water. These are blended with the divine body as if hiding their original non-anthropomorphic meaning and are articulated as if "disguised" by the deity's lower garments. Such depictions were used in Akkadian glyptics for conveying divine images, among them Shamash sunrise from the mountains, where at times only his torso and head were shown, while the rest of his body was "hidden" and the natural phenomenon became part of his body. In other instances divine figures are shown merging with streams of water, seen, for example, on a well-known Akkadian cylinder seal from Mari, on which the lower bodies of two goddess are fused with the depiction of a river, and the embodiment of the divine body with natural phenomena is enhanced by the branches of trees growing from the two divine female figures (fig. 37). At times a river may end with two human-shaped torsos and heads in order to convey its divinity (fig. 38).[101] The probable image of Shamash, whose lower body is

99 Klengel-Brandt 1980 (see reservation in Stein 1994b, 301); Uehlinger 1993; Reade 2000.

100 Harper *et al.* 1995, 61–62 (with bibliography).

101 Boehmer 1965, no. 393; Amiet 1960, figs. 2, 3b, 5; Hansen 2002, 99, 102.

articulated as a scale-patterned mountain in Old Babylonian imagery, continued in north Mesopotamian Old Babylonian imagery, best exemplified through the limestone Cabane Statue attributed to Mari, bearing an inscription of Yasmah-Adad,[102] to which the above-mentioned Ashur Well relief was compared. This embodiment of natural phenomenon with a divine image became a rather common trait in the late imagery of the Hittite Empire, perhaps reflecting some Hurrian traditions. It is already known in the Old Hittite period, as evidenced by a fifteenth-century cylinder seal on which the mountain god accompanies a triumphant storm god riding on his chariot. Two mountain gods with heads bent forward appear as the mount of the storm god Teshub leading the procession of the male gods at Yazilikaya. Four other mountain gods, depicted in their own right among the row of the male deities, are represented in the literature on this open-air Hittite sanctuary as figures 13, 15, 16a, 17. Five sculptures of mountain gods form the lower register of the spring monument at Eflâtun Pinar, dated to *ca.* 1200, and a small ivory figurine of the same deity was found in the palace attributed to the time of Hattushili III. These figures fit the replacement of the abstract sign with the anthropomorphic mountain god in the cartouche of Tudhalya IV (1245–1215 BCE) at Yazilikaya (marked in the literature as figures 64 and 83), and his impressions found at Büyükkale and Ugarit, emphasizing his special interest in the figure of the mountain deity during his later years.[103]

102 PKG, pl. 161.

103 Alexander 1986, 61, 92–93, 98; van Loon 1985, 12, 20–21, 28, 33; see also Beyer 2001, 75 (A46).

CHAPTER TWO

OUT OF BABYLONIA

NON-ANTHROPOMORPHIC REPRESENTATIONS OF DEITIES IN SECOND-MILLENNIUM MESOPOTAMIA

2.1. Some Precursors: Non-Anthropomorphic Deities in Old Babylonian, Anatolian, Syrian and Mitannian Glyptic Art

As a rule, divinities in Mesopotamia and in other areas of the ancient Near East were perceived to be of human form, notwithstanding the fact that their physical dimensions and other characteristics were considered to be larger and superior than that of humans.[104] Indeed, the human substance of the divine is revealed in Mesopotamia by myth and ritual, implying that deities were born, nurtured, fathered and raised in a similar manner to their human models.[105] Accordingly, the common rendering of deities in Mesopotamian art was anthropomorphic. In order to distinguish between divine images and those of mortals, the gods of Mesopotamia were described, both in writing and in pictorial representations, as wearing a headdress adorned with one or more pairs of horns.[106] The horned mitre, however, was not the only visual signifier of divinity, and deities in "canonical" Mesopotamian art were also marked by other means. In Babylonia, for instance, from the twelfth century deities were also signified by a feathered cap (figs. 4, 5, 12), although, as attested by a few depictions of probable earthly rulers (fig. 8), such a cap was used at the same time to signify both deities and royal figures. An alternate head covering is exemplified by the high cylindrical hornless hat, sported by the mountain god depicted on the Ashur Well Relief (fig. 36).

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104 Boehmer 1957–71, 466–469; Jacobsen 1989, 126; Lambert 1990, 122–123; Black and Green 1992, 93; Green 1994, 247; DDD 357; Bottéro 2001, 58–59, 64–69.

105 Hurowitz 2003b, 147–153.

106 For the horns as a divine signifier, see Wiggermann 1994, 233; Asher-Greve 1995–96.

In spite of the rich material attesting to widespread anthropomorphic representation of deities, inanimate objects, animals, composite creatures, stylized natural phenomena and floral motifs were used to signify divine entities in Mesopotamian imagery from very early times. These were shown as objects either carried by a deity or shown in his or her immediate proximity, and their main purpose was to serve as an identifying attribute. At other times, objects associated with divinities were shown without the deity in question and hence served as symbols standing for their signified entity.[107] These symbolic representations of the divine were illustrated on items dating from as early as the late Uruk period in the later half of the fourth millennium, e.g. the long looped poles with streamers that represented Inanna or the lion-headed eagle Anzu that symbolizes Ningirsu on Early Dynastic artifacts.[108] Anthropomorphic renderings of the divine, signified by a horned mitre, became common and were "canonized" in Akkadian glyptic art. However, astral symbols, replacing divine anthropomorphic images, were selected for the stela of Naram-Sin (2254–2218 BCE), depicted above the image of the deified ruler.[109] This unique symbolic representation, however, accorded well with the unusual representation of the godly king on the monument, since it may be conjectured that if a human-shaped deity had been portrayed on the stela, his form would have competed with the image of the glorified king, possibly diminishing the latter in the eye of the beholder. Divine emblems occasionally replaced anthropomorphic statues, as the latter were perceived to be most holy and could not always be in attendance when a divine presence was needed, as is attested in late periods, when oaths were sometimes sworn in front of symbols in lieu of divine statues.[110] Representations of divine emblems in the role of cult objects are exemplified in glyptic art of Neo-Sumerian and Old Babylonian times by the crescent moon

107 On the difference between an attribute and a symbol, see Seidl 1989, 120, 121, 125.

108 Seidl 1971, 490. Cf. PKG, pls. 88, 97, 120, but compare pl. 90 (the Stela of the Vultures), where the Anzu appears as an attribute held by the god.

109 Groenewgen-Frankfort 1987, 163–164; Bänder 1995, 171–172.

110 Lambert 1990, 123–124.

standard, which serves as the focus of veneration.[111] The depiction of the crescent standard as replacing the image of the moon god in human form continues in the Old Babylonian period (e.g., fig. 45), although anthropomorphic renderings of divinities were generally much more common in Babylonian imagery until the fourteenth century.[112]

Other frequent divine symbols typical of the Old Babylonian glyptic imagery, such as the lightning bolt and the bull associated with Adad and the curved staff linked to Amurru, are among the more frequent symbols used in the seals' imagery. The bull and the lightning bolt depicted on Old Babylonian cylinder seals can be divided into three groups according to their position and role within the scene. The first group, dating mainly from the second half of the nineteenth century and the first half of the eighteenth, consists of seals on which the symbols appear as secondary elements, not necessarily associated with the main anthropomorphic deity portrayed on the seal. The second group includes seals on which the bull and the lightning bolt serve as attributes, carried by the human-shaped storm god, or displayed in close proximity to his body. On the seals comprising the third group, the bull and the lightning bolt function as symbols of the storm god in the absence of his anthropomorphic representation. The two symbols are either depicted among other emblems, or appear as the main focus of worship towards which the worshipper gestures,[113] as exemplified in fig. 39, where the worshipper gestures towards symbols of the storm god, a lightning bolt and a bull, placed in the centre of the scene and serving as a replacement for anthropomorphic Adad. On seals of this type, the lightning bolt—like in scenes portraying the human-shaped storm god—was often shown alongside a nude woman, the suppliant goddess Lama and a divine figure carrying a sceptre, identified as the Udug spirit.[114] A similar picture emerges with regard to the *gamlu*, the curved staff that sometimes

111 Colbow 1997b, 22–24.

112 Ornan 2001b, 9–11.

113 Collon 1986, 53, no. 95; Delaporte 1910, no. 255; 1920, no. 28; 1923, no. 25; Porada 1948, no. 503; Moortgat 1940, no. 505.

114 Williams 1982, 122–136 and bibliography therein; Wiggermann 1985–86.

substituted for anthropomorphic Amurru and was occasionally mounted on a gazelle, the god's attribute animal.[115]

The lightning bolt, the bull and the *gamlu* were emblems representing West-Semitic divinities, which began penetrating Mesopotamia at the close of the third millennium,[116] with the arrival of new peoples. The use of these symbols as substitutes for divine anthropomorphic images may have been inspired by western traditions, as may be conjectured from other western traits revealing a preference for non-anthropomorphic cult, as the uniconic cults focus on stelae prevalent in Middle Bronze Syria and the Levant and the exclusive use of *abnu*, "stone stela", as a theophoric component in the Amorite and West-Semitic names of the Old Babylonian period.[117] The convention of replacing the storm deity by its sacred bull is well demonstrated in central Anatolian tradition by local sealings from nineteenth-century Kültepe-Kanesh level II, the Old Assyrian trading post. On these sealings, worshippers are shown along with offerings for the bull, thus confirming the role of the beast as representing a god. These bull renderings demonstrate, as shown by Leinwand, a non-Mesopotamian feature that continued an old autochtonic tradition, already practiced in third-millennium Anatolian cult, as evidenced by bronze standards found in the tombs at Alacahöyük.[118] Worship of a bull is also revealed on the Old Hittite relief vase from Inandik, in Anatolia, and on a sculptured wall decoration from Alacahöyük, dating from the period of the Hittite Empire (figs. 40, 41). According to cult inventories, mostly dated from the reign of Tudhalya IV, worshipping animal figurines and non-animated objects, such as animal-shaped vessels, human organs, horns, weapons, winged discs and standing stones, was common practice in Anatolia during the Hittite Empire. It is noteworthy that although after the reform of Tudhalya IV (*ca.* 1225) most Hittite deities were represented in

115 Frankfort 1939, 164; Kupper 1961, 13, 42–49; *CAD* 5 *gamlu*, 35; Wiggermann 1985–86, n. 6; Collon 1986, 27, nos. 225–234; Colbow 1997a.

116 Kupper 1961, 84–86; Vanel 1965, 160–161.

117 Mettinger 1995, 115–128, 175–191 and bibliography therein; van der Toorn 1997b, 10.

118 Özguç 1988, 100; Leinwand 1992, 145–153.

human form, the storm god was still worshipped in its theriomorphic form.[119]

Worship of emblem is also evident on Syrian and Anatolian seals from the end of the Middle Bronze Age, which portrayed tree worship associated with images of the storm god combatting a snake. Williams-Forte has classified seals portraying the storm god into four iconographic groups, the latter of which includes representations of a lightning-like tree—the weapon used by the god to defeat the snake—in place of the divine figure. The role of the tree in this glyptic group was modified into a symbol, which stood in for the god and was accompanied by humans, hybrids or supernatural creatures. In later Late Bronze seals, the tree was generally depicted as an attribute held in the hand of the storm god.[120] On Middle Bronze scarabs and cylinder seals from Israel/Palestine, the tree also represented a divine symbol accompanied by a mortal worshipper, which stood for an anthropomorphic deity—mainly female. The conversion of a divine image into an emblem is typical in Mitannian glyptics, as has been noted by Porada: "... due to the change in iconography of most of the seal designs in the Mitannian period from the Old Babylonian subject of gods with or without worshippers to worshippers alone, often with a sacred tree or with a sacred tree flanked only by animals or composite creatures."[121] The tree would often replace a male deity, perhaps the storm god, while the caprids often represented the image of Shaushka-Ishtar (fig. 42), at times flanking a tree and forming an elaborate symbolic group (fig. 43).[122]

2.2. Non-Anthropomorphic Deities in Middle Babylonian Monuments

In contrast to the scanty evidence of the above surveyed human-shaped images of deities rendered on *kudurru*s (Chapter 1, § 1.1), non-anthropomorphic depiction is the most common form of representation on these monuments. Textually, the deities, in whose presence the entitlements of the *kudurru* stones were ensured and

119 Van Loon 1985, 29.

120 Williams-Forte 1983, 25–26.

121 Porada 1992, 228

122 Keel 1998, 22–36; Lambert 1985, 435; Stein 1988, 177–178, fig. 11.

ratified, were mentioned in the monument's inscription; visually, they were mostly represented by their emblems. Indeed, as indicated by Seidl, the human-form portrayal of the divine was pushed aside by other means of representation—symbolic—in Middle Babylonian monumental art.[123] These divine symbols were arranged on the monuments either randomly or in ordered rows, the prominence of an emblem—and hence that of its signified deity—being indicated by its dominating position (fig. 44), in accordance with common Mesopotamian convention. The emblems pertaining to the heads of the Mesopotamian pantheon, Anu, Enlil, Ea and at times Ninhursag, were placed at the top of the monuments. These major deities are usually topped by three astral symbols in a layaout that may reflect cosmic reality: the crescent and full moon, the rayed disc of the sun and an eight-pointed star of Ishtar. It should be emphasized with this regard that the most prominent of these deities, Anu and Enlil were not portrayed in human form in Mesopotamian art, a phenomenon highlighting the intrinsic Mesopotamian difficulty of granting the divine a human image when it was rendered visually.

A few of the symbols rendered on the *kudurru*s have turned out to be most common in first-millennium Babylonian glyptics; hence, some elaboration of their history is in order. Beginning with the Kassite period, depictions of the emblems of Marduk and Nabu—the spade and the stylus—gradually became more frequent, peaking during the first millennium, when Marduk's prominence was on the rise. This frequency contradicts the few known anthropomorphic portrayals of these two gods. The *marru* emblem of Marduk refers to a "spade"; hence, its origins have been associated with agriculture.[124] Its identification as the symbol of Marduk is acknowledged by a legend accompanying it on a *kudurru* of Meli-Shipak (fig. 16), reconfirmed by first-millennium monuments as the stelae of Bel-Harran-bel-uṣur, of Sargon II from Larnaka and Sennacherib's relief at Bavian, on which the spade is textually identified as the *marru* of Marduk. Evidently, depictions of spades proper began in the Ur III–Isin Larsa periods, continuing into the Old Babylonian period, and appeared on

123 Seidl 1989, 195; PKG, 299.

124 *CAD* 10(1), *marru*, 289; Collon 2001, 13.

Kassite cylinder seals bearing inscriptions addressed to Marduk.[125] On *kudurru*s, the *marru* was usually depicted alongside Nabu's wedge, in the third register from the top, beneath symbols of the heavenly bodies and the emblems of Anu, Enlil, Ea and Ninhursag (e.g., fig. 14). The placement of these symbols on the *kudurru*s indicates that, despite the rise in Marduk's prominence in Kassite times, he was still confined to his position as patron god of Babylon and was not considered among the chief deities of the pantheon, Anu and Enlil. Marduk's relatively low status in second-millennium Babylonian imagery is further illuminated by *kudurru*s from the reign of Nebuchadnezzar I, during the last quarter of the twelfth century. During the time of this king, who was praised for retrieving the god's statue from its Elamite captors, Marduk probably achieved a status nearly equal to that of Enlil and Anu, yet his emblem continued to be shown in the third register from the top on the Šitti-Marduk monument, which commemorates the victory of Nebuchadnezzar I over Elam. The contrast between picture and text on this particular monument is illuminating since the heads of the pantheon, Anu, Enlil and Ea, are missing from the curse section of the inscription, probably in order to elevate Marduk, while their emblems are still portrayed above the symbol of Marduk.[126] This discrepancy between religious reality and contemporary imagery stresses the somewhat conservative nature of religious iconography, which at times seems to fail to update theological-political modifications. A visual confirmation of Marduk's rise in power, conveyed through a unique composition with the *marru*, is rendered on the above-mentioned eleventh-century *kudurru* of Marduk-nādin-aḫḫe, where a splendidly dressed worshipper, probably the king wearing a feathered crown, gestures with his left clenched fist toward a spade (fig. 8), foreshadowing common first-millennium Babylonian glyptic depictions.

The stylus, usually accompanied by the spade of Marduk on the *kudurru*s, symbolized Nabu, who is also shown in the beginning of the twelfth century, during Meli-Shipak's reign. The identification of the stylus as the symbol of Nabu, the god in charge of writing and wisdom, has been verified by a *kudurru* attributed to Marduk-apla-

125 Seidl 1989, 120–121.

126 King 1912, 29–36, pl. 83; DDD 545; Slanski 2003, 178.

iddina I, Meli-Shipak's successor. And like the emblem of Marduk, the stylus's function as Nabu's symbol has also been confirmed by the first-millennium inscriptions on the stelae of Bel-Harran-bel-uṣur and of Sargon from Larnaka, and on Sennacherib's Bavian relief.[127] Prior to these representations, the stylus was depicted together with a tablet on the gypsum pedestal of Tukulti-Ninurta I (fig. 51). As an attribute held by an enthroned god mounted on a *mušḫuššu* the stylus is found on Old Babylonian cylinder seal, where it may signify the deity as Nabu, while the snake-dragon connects it with his father, Marduk (fig. 46).[128]

This association between the *marru* and the stylus with the snake-dragon *mušḫuššu*, the sacred hybrid of Marduk and Nabu, is well demonstrated on early twelfth-century *kudurru*s from the reign of Meli-Shipak, were the two emblems are mounted on the creature or positioned next to it. The *mušḫuššu* was viewed as a menacing hybrid with leonine features and a snake's head, which spouted two erect horns or a long horn, bent back with a curling end. Its long forked tongue sometimes hung from its mouth or, alternately, was depicted as if spitting fire. Its neck and body were scaly; its tail was upright and snake-like; its front legs resembled those of a lion; its rear legs were talon-like.[129] The Sumerian MUŠ-HUŠ, "raging snake", mentioned in Old Babylonian texts, has been visually identified through its appearances on the *kudurru*s of Meli-Shipak and by later comparisons between its representations on the sixth-century Ishtar gate in Babylon (fig. 148) and references made to it in building descriptions dating from Nebuchadnezzar II.[130] A creature similar to the *mušḫuššu*, but resembling a lion more than a snake, was depicted at least as early as the Early Dynastic II period.[131] At its advent, this hybrid probably acted as an escort of the snake-king Ninazu, lord of the underworld, who was worshipped in Eshnunna. In the Akkadian period, when Tishpak became the god of Eshnunna, the snake-hybrid *mušḫuššu* began to symbolize him, simultaneously representing Ningizida,

127 Seidl 1989, 124.

128 Collon 1986, 155, no. 382; cf. Seidl 1989, 191.

129 Lambert 1984, 87; Seidl 1989, 187–193; Green 1994, 258–259.

130 Lambert 1984, 87–88.

131 Lewis 1996, 33–34.

Ninazu's son at Lagash, who, in Neo-Sumeriam representation, was sometimes winged. It was only after Eshnunna's conquest by Hammurabi, that the creature came to be associated with Marduk and Nabu.[132] Like other hybrids, the *mušḫuššu* had both positive apotropaic connotations and negative ones related to his role as Murduk's enemy. However, in representations from just before the twelfth century onward, it was shown in a positive light, as the subjugated hybrid of Marduk and his son, Nabu.[133]

Another divine emblem which became rather popular in first-millennium Babylonian cylinder and stamp seals is the dog, representing Gula, the healing goddess Ninisina, Lady of Isin.[134] Depictions of dogs in various contexts are encountered in Mesopotamian imagery as early as the third millennium, as exemplified by their incorporation in hunting and shepherding scenes in Akkadian glyptic representations that describe the ascent to heaven of Etana on the eagle.[135] Old Babylonian cylinder seals depict sitting or crouching dogs, usually large mastiffs, which were also represented on clay tablets and in figurines.[136] The apotropaic, probably guardian, character of the dog is further implied by first-millennium figures of dogs flanking gateways and by canine skeletons buried under doorways.[137] The specific role of the dog as the symbol of Gula, is, however, suggested by dog figurines inscribed with dedications to the goddess found at Isin, Aqar-Quf (Dûr-Kurigalzu) and Sippar, as well as by burial of dogs revealed at her shrine at Isin, reconfirmed by two *kudurru*s dated to the reign of Marduk-apla-iddina I, which bear identifying legends accompanying the rendering of the dog.[138] As a

132 Lambert 1984, 90–92; Wiggermann 1992, 168, fig. 3; Suter 2000, 65–66; Collon 1982b, 75, no. 144.

133 Seidl 1989, 191–193; Green 1984, 83.

134 Ornan 2004b.

135 Boehmer 1965, 122, nos. 168, 693–701.

136 At times it is difficult to distinguish these representations of dogs from depictions of lions, see Collon 1986, 43–44.

137 Braun-Holzinger 1988, 126; Wiggermann 1992, 58, 98; Muscarella 1981, 115.

138 Seidl 1989, 143; I. Fuhr in Hrouda 1977, 135–145 (for actual canine skeletons from *ca.* 1000 found at Isin, see *ibid.*, Boessneck, 95–109); Postgate 1994, 176–177.

divine symbol the dog continued on First-Kassite seals from the reign of Burnaburiash, no later than the beginning of the thirteenth century.[139] Dogs are rarely depicted in Middle Assyrian imagery, although one is shown on an impression of a tablet from Tell al-Rimah, dated to the later years of Shalmaneser I, where it is part of a realistic scene illustrating the lives of shepherds (fig. 47),[140] recalling the role of the dogs in the Old Akkadian cylinder seals of Etana and reconfirming the underlying ties between Akkadian imagery and Middle Assyrian iconography.[141] Another rendering of a dog is found on an impression from the twelfth-century archive of Tiglath-pileser I (fig. 56), where the animal, however, clearly fulfills the role of a divine symbol. There it is placed on a pedestal within a walled structure, in front of which the worshipper king gestures, demonstrating a rare Assyrian representation of the dog as a divine emblem and hinting at possible Babylonian influence (discussed below, § 2.5).

2.3. Non-Anthropomorphic Deities in Middle Babylonian Cylinder Seals

The prevalent emblematic renderings on the *kudurru*s were also apparent in Kassite glyptics, reflected, as noted above, in the lesser frequency of anthropomorphic renderings on twelfth-century Pseudo-Kassite and in particular on contemporary Third Kassite cylinder seals. As indicated by Beran, the human form was "abbreviated" or over-simplified on some early Kassite seals, which depicted symbols, reminiscent of those rendered on *kudurru*s and on later Late Babylonian seals.[142] Indeed, Kassite glyptics reveals a certain avoidance from representing human shaped deities not only in its Third Kassite style, but also in its other groups, manifest in a preference for depiction of divine symbols, either accompanied by mortals or on their own; through scenes showing only a worshipper (figs. 48–50); and through cylinder seals bearing only inscriptions,

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139 Moortgat 1940, no. 554 and 556, 558; Matthews 1990, 58. For later seals depicting a dog, *ibid.*, nos. 189, 231, 242.

140 Parker 1974.

141 Smith 1965, 110.

142 Beran 1957–58, 262.

with no visual component.[143] This non-anthropomorphic propensity of Middle Babylonian glyptics is further enhanced by the appearance of the tree as an independent symbol in Second Kassite style. It is also reflected by other subject matters selected for late second- and early first-millennium Babylonian cylinder seals, which followed Middle Assyrian glyptic themes in focusing on representations of trees flanked by animals, fantastic creatures and combat scenes.[144] One may therefore conclude that the tendency to avoid divine anthropomorphic portrayals was readily apparent through all media of Middle Babylonian iconography, and was not restricted to any specific type of artifact.

A comparison between the imagery of the *kudurru* entitlement monuments and that of Kassite cylinder seals may emphasize the former's idiosyncrasy with regard to divine symbolic representations, on the one hand, and the latter's inclination to avoid anthropomorphic depictions of deities, on the other hand. There is a limited correspondence between divine symbols appearing on *kudurru*s and on Kassite seals, in particular those of the First Kassite style, also revealed through an investigation of specific emblems, as the *mušḫuššu* or the omega, which appear on *kudurru*s but are absent from the glyptic renderings. Nevertheless, the common emblems depicted in both media may highlight the connections between the two types of artifacts. These shared symbols include a dog, a spade, a cross, a centaur, a crescent and star, a bird with its head turned back, a bird-on-a-pole, and a horse's head. The frequency of the divine symbols on both media differed, however: the spade, centaur, horse's head and two types of bird motif were not common on seals, whereas a cross was common on seals, but less frequent on *kudurru*s.[145]

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143 Van Buren 1954, 33; Matthews 1990, 55–56; Stiehler-Alegria 1996, 210. For seals bearing inscriptions alone, cf. inscribed West-Semitic seals, Ornan 1993, 68–71.

144 Van Buren 1954, 39; Porada 1947, 145–165; Wittmann 1992.

145 Matthews 1990, 81–83. Veneration of a bird-on-a-pole and a horse appears on a cylinder seal formerly considered to be Babylonian because of its resemblance to a *kudurru* of Nebuchadnezzar I (Porada 1948, 66; but see reservation by Matthews 1990, 81, with bibliography). Seidl 1989, 20, 76, fig. 1 (a cross on a

The variance in the iconographical layout and the selection of symbols of both types of objects stemmed, as suggested above, from their different background. As opposed to the *kudurru*s, which may be considered a new medium in Mesopotamian imagery, Kassite cylinder seals continued an ancient Mesopotamian tradition, conveying, mainly in their early stages, a well-known imagery. The motifs shown on the *kudurru*s were not exclusively drawn from the age-old Mesopotamian visual repertoire, and they probably represent a particular Kassite selection of motifs. Kassite traits are apparent in some instances, where emblems such as the bird with its head turned back, representing the Kassite god Harba, or the bird-on-a-pole, representing the Kassite deity Shuqamuna, were portrayed.[146] The uniconic traits of Kassite art, demonstrated by the long inscriptions engraved on some of the seals and by the occasional use of legends instead of visual depictions, accord with the preference for divine emblems over anthropomorphic renderings, which possibly stemmed from a specific Kassite tradition—even though traces of this inclination did exist in earlier in Mesopotamian imagery.

2.4. Non-Anthropomorphic Deities in Middle Assyrian Monuments

Predilection for non-anthropomorphic representation of deities is even more noticeable in Middle Assyrian imagery, where examples of devotional scenes of symbol worship in lieu of divine-figure worship are apparent. An outstanding artifact displaying such a theme is a gypsum cult pedestal revealed in room 6 of Ishtar's temple in Ashur and attributed by the dedicatory legend inscribed on its plinth to Tukulti-Ninurta I. The scene in question is sculptured on the front of the socle and contains an exact replica of the monument itself. The king, carrying a mace-like sceptre and gesturing toward a stylus and tablet, turns to the right towards the socle. He is represented kneeling and standing in sequential action, which is commonly regarded as a forerunner of the narrative display of the monumental Neo-Assyrian

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fourteenth-century *kudurru)*. For the cross as a symbol probably signifying Marduk in Babylonian imagery, see Ehrenberg 2002a.

146 Grayson 1971, 639; Seidl 1989, 148, 151; Beran 1957–58, 64; Mettinger 1995, 48.

art (fig. 51).[147] The inscription on the plinth, invoking the god Nusku, led scholars to identify the stylus and tablet—which usually stand for Nabu—as the emblems of Nusku, otherwise represented by an oil lamp.[148] Discrepancies between text and picture were not unknown in Mesopotamian art, as noted below with regard to Sennacherib's Seal of Destinies (fig. 130)[149] and with regard to the lack of Assyrian textual references relating to the stylized tree. However, it seems that in this case the visual and the textual expressions did converge into one message. As recently suggested by Baharani, Nusku, an interceding god and a deity in charge of dreams, may also be alluded to by the pictorial rendering and, thus, the two emblems may represent this god.[150] However, for the purpose of tracing the replacement of anthropomorphic deities with their symbols, the very choice of the stylus and tablet is the crucial point. Since these emblems were so common in Babylonian imagery (though often positioned horizontally, e.g. figs. 14, 44), it may be suggested that their unique representation in Assyria was an outcome of Babylonian inspiration.

This possible Babylonian influence fits other instances of Babylonian motifs appearing in Middle Assyrian imagery, as shown by the rare depiction of a dog as a divine emblem, popular in Middle Babylonian imagery, on a tablet from the archive of Tiglath-pileser I, mentioned above (fig. 56). The kneeling pose of the king depicted on the pedestal of Tukulti-Ninurta I may also signal Babylonian imagery, as it has been attested, though with some variation, in Old Babylonian iconography.[151] A second cultic pedestal, found outside the Ishtar temple, attributed to the same king, provides another example of avoidance of a prominent human-form deity. Here, moreover, there is no symbol serving as a cult object, and the king, flanked by two *laḫmu*s on guard, is shown alone (fig. 52).[152] The above-noted

147 Harper *et al.* 1995, 112–113 (with previous bibliography).

148 Seidl 1989, 124–125, 130, no. 18, pl. 9d, nos. 31–32, pl. 15a–b; 1971, 468.

149 George 1986, 142.

150 Bahrani 2003, 185–201.

151 Braun-Holzinger 1984, 54, nos. 191, 192; Stein 1994a, 310.

152 The schematized emblems on the curved tips of the podium and on the standards carried by the *laḫmu*s, perhaps refering to Shamash (Stein 1994a, 310), cannot be regarded as the focal cultic object of the shrine depicted in the scene.

depiction of a dog on a comparable pedestal and a similar one shown on another seal impression from the archive of Tiglath-pileser I (figs. 56, 57), may imply that these stone socles (as well as four other undecorated ones discovered in the same vicinity) were intended to serve as mounts for non-anthropomorphic cult objects. As a corollary, one may note a prayer of Tukulti-Ninurta in which storm and sun deities are referred to as the glow and voice of Ashur,[153] suggesting some abstention from anthropomorphic visualization of the divine. Nevertheless, the possibility that divine symbols were only shown in pictorial representation, while in reality the divine portrayed on such pedestals may have retained his human form, should not be ruled out. After all, as discussed below, some modification of reality often accrued during the cognitive process of "translating" it into visual means, and thus artistic renderings do not always necessarily reflect actual cultic practice.

Another Middle Assyrian symbolic representation of the divine is rendered on the Broken Obelisk discovered at Nineveh, dated to the early years of Aššur-Bel-kala in the second quarter of the eleventh century. An unfinished inscription reporting hunting activities and building operations that had taken place at Ashur is inscribed on the monument (fig. 54).[154] The pictorial part of the obelisk, articulated on the front of the Obelisk within a sunken quadrangle below the two upper "steps", between the first two columns of the text, portrays the standing king in front of four pleading enemies. Above the enemies, a little higher than the king's head are five divine symbols: a horned mitre, a crescent, a winged disc, a lightning bolt, and a star or a rosette.

The scene depicted on this monument combines two visual traditions in an innovative manner. On the one hand, the representation of a king facing his defeated foes may be considered to describe a historical event—even if the specific episode is not identified. In that respect this representation is related to a new trend of Middle Assyrian art, which pertained to historical events, plausibly inspired by New Kingdom Egyptian representations. A depiction of an episode of a presumable historical nature is rendered on the plinth of

153 Parpola 1993, 173, n. 56.

154 Grayson 1991, 99–105; Moortgat 1969, 122–123, pl. 252.

the second pedestal of Tukulti-Ninurta, discussed above, depicting a generic victory scene conveyed by a row of captives in a mountainous area (fig. 52) and on a contemporary, fragmentary pyxis lid from Ashur representing a king(?) riding in his chariot and raising a cup, above which is a war scene with fallen enemies (fig. 53).[155] These renderings, which to a limited extent reflect reality, are also manifested through mid-twelfth-century glyptic finds illustrating a vivid chariot hunt, and in particular on the above-mentioned White Obelisk.[156] However, the scene depicted on the Broken Obelisk differs from the latter examples in that its representation was not articulated through successive episodes but rather through the representation of a "culmination scene" an age-old means of Mesopotamian imagery for conveying a "story".[157] In contrast to the narrative approach, which often uses movement, the scene of the Broken Obelisk, like other examples in Mesopotamian art, is static and motionless.

On the one hand, the scene of the Broken Obelisk relates to older Mesopotamian representations, such as the "Standard" of Ur, votive plaques of Urnanshe, or Eannatum and Naram-Sin stelae, in the use of scale to signify importance.[158] Portraying smaller, secondary figures standing before a major larger one, as exemplified on the monument, contrasts the rule of *isokephalia* common in Akkadian processions or in Ur III and Old Babylonian presentation scenes, where importance marked by scale, is achieved by depicting the enthroned protagonist at the same height as the standing figures approaching him. Moreover, whereas in earlier representation scenes, excluding some Ur III examples depicting an enthroned king, the major figure being approached to is a divinity, on the Broken Obelisk it is a royal figure—a transformation reflecting the rise in status of the king and heralding his elevation in first-millennium Assyrian art, followed by first-millennium Babylonian monuments, where a king faced by a subordinate replaces the divine image (e.g., fig. 144).

In spite of the rise in the role of the king reflected on the Broken Obelisk, the highest position of the divine presence is maintained, as

155 Moortgat 1969, 119-120, pl. 244; Stein 1994a, 304, fig. 5.

156 Smith 1965, 110, 117–118; Pittman 1996, 349; Moortgat 1944, 38, fig. 39.

157 Perkins 1957, 55, 61–62.

158 Suter 2000, 260.

the gods were basically conceived as the power underlying all royal achievements. Transmitted into non-anthropomorphic renderings, these gods still dominate the scene, yet do not compete with the royal figure in the eye of the beholder. This choice in divine emblematic representations may be regarded as an outcome of Babylonian influence, particularly when considering the military Babylonian campaigns carried out by Aššur-Bel-kala.[159] However, the composition and details of the monument reflect the scene's independence from Babylonian imagery, as the theme of the mortals facing one another is not encountered in Babylonian iconography until the first millennium, as noted above. Moreover, the selection of emblems depicted on the obelisk is not that used in contemporary Babylonian monuments, and their placement in a row in front of the king foreshadows later Neo-Assyrian royal stelae. These emblems are represented by four highly schematized symbols of natural phenomena—a crescent for the moon, a bident for the storm, a star(?) and winged disc, with the addition of an animated object—a horned headdress. The location of the winged disc at the centre of the divine row enhances the importance of the deity it signified. The major role of this symbol in this context is further highlighted by the presence of a bow and an arrow, alluding to the divinity's martial character and hence identifying it with the god Ashur.[160]

The uniqueness of the winged disc depicted on the Broken Obelisk is further emphasized by the pair of hands emerging from it, demonstrating a new type of symbolism, which combines into one icon human traits with an astral symbol. Later versions of an anthropomorphisized winged disc is rendered on the ninth-century glazed tile of Tukulti-Ninurta II and on wall reliefs of Ashurnasirpal II from Nimrud (figs. 107, 110), where the god placed within the disc brandishes a bow. The same kind of symbolism continues on Neo-Assyrian cylinder seals, depicting the winged disc with a human head, flanked, at times, by two additional heads (figs. 133, 134).

This amalgamation of human features with an animated emblem conveys a certain concession to anthropomorphism and brings to mind the semi-personification of the sun, conveyed through rays

159 Grayson 1991, 86

160 Ornan, forthcoming (b).

terminating with human hands depicted in New Kingdom Egyptian imagery of the Amarna period.[161] Although these Amarna renderings are older than the anthropomorphisized winged disc of the Broken Obelisk, and were probably well concealed in the eleventh century, Egyptian influence on some aspects of Middle Assyrian art in general, and contacts with Egypt attested by the inscription of Aššur-Bel-kala in particular,[162] may hint at Egyptian inspiration on the anthropomorphisized winged disc of the Broken Obelisk. Divine symbols composed of human organs combined with animated objects were used in a few other occasions in the art of the ancient Near East during the second half of the second millennium. For example, the portrayal of Nergal in chamber B at Yazilikaya is constructed by fusing a human head with a huge elaborate sword. Similarly, the pair of hands engraved below a full and crescent moon on a small stela from temple C at Hazor probably alludes to the benediction deity conveyed through his astral symbol and blessing "human" hands. A deity symbolized only by his or her feet is portrayed on the entrance threshold of the late second–early first-millennium temple at ʿEin Dara, where the huge feet represent the image of the major deity dwelling in the temple.[163]

2.5. Non-Anthropomorphic Deities in Middle Assyrian Cylinder Seals

Associated with the above-discussed Middle Assyrian cylinder seals depicting a god-and-worshipper are glyptic finds displaying a man facing a symbol or a ziggurat-like structure. These are illustrated on an impression dated to Shalmaneser I; the above-noted impressions from the archive of Tiglath-pileser I and the cylinder seal from the temple of Ishtar-dinitu in Ashur; a similar seal from Babylon; a lapis lazuli

161 Freed *et al.* 1999, 102.

162 Grayson 1991, 86.

163 Yazilikaya: Alexander 1986, 61–62; Winter 1989, 95. In his later discussion of the stela from Hazor, Yadin (1972, 73) identifies the hands as representing a divinity, though attributing them to another deity than that represented by the moon crescent and disc. The depiction of hands on the Hazor stela differs from that on the Broken Obelisk, as the hands do not "touch" the astral symbol and are pointed upwards. For ʿEin Dara, see Alexander 2002.

cylinder seal kept in the British Museum; and a seal showing a ziggurat and altars from Tell Mohammad Arab (figs. 55–61). The adoration of symbols portrayed in figs. 56, 61, or the depictions of a sacred building with no cult object, rendered on cylinder seals from Ashur, Babylon and Tell Mohammed Arab (figs. 58–60), confirm the general approach in Middle Assyrian iconography of refraining from divine anthropomorphic portrayal.[164] This tendency is further sustained when acknowledging that the most common themes selected for Middle Assyrian cylinder seals display combat scenes, where figures in human form are either absent altogether, or if present, are not clearly identifiable as divine.[165] This non-anthropomorphic inclination accords well with the symbolic nature of Assyrian imagery reflected by the prominent role of the stylized tree in Middle Assyrian glyptic art and mural imagery, which continued into first-millennium iconography (discussed in Chapter 6, § 6.1).[166] The role of the small glyptic group depicting symbol worship should be emphasized not only because it corroborates the ties between Middle Assyrian and first-millennium Babylonian glyptics,[167] but also because it heralds the most popular glyptic theme in the Late Babylonian period: worship of divine symbols.

Substitution of a divine emblem for a deity in human form occurred, as postulated by Frankfort, as a result of a chasm that emerged between man and god in Assyrian, as opposed to Babylonian, art.[168] However, the dearth of anthropomorphic deities from Assyrian glyptics, their replacement by emblems on the cult pedestals of Tukulti-Ninurta I and on impressions dated to Tiglath-pileser I, and the specific Babylonian repertoire of symbols selected for these artifacts—the dog, the goat-fish, the stylus and tablet[169]—strongly suggest Babylonian inspiration on Assyrian divine symbolism, in

164 The cylinder seal from Babylon, found in a tomb dated to 1300–1100, is considered by Stiehler-Alegria (2000) to be a Babylonian product.

165 Matthews 1990, 106; Stein 1994a, 306–307.

166 Frankfort 1996, 137; Matthews 1990, 91–94, 106–107.

167 Porada 1947.

168 Frankfort 1996, 132.

169 Seidl 1989, 121–125, 140–143, 178–181. See also Haller 1954 (140, pl. 31: c, d) for alabaster vases decorated with a goat-fish (Harper *et al.* 1995, 88).

particular due to the proliferation of symbolic depictions on Babylonian *kudurrus*. Relations between Assyria and Babylon reached their peak during the reign of Shalmaneser I—indeed, his seal did not depict an anthropomorphic god[170]—and that of his son and successor Tukult-Ninurta I, reconstituted during the reign of Aššur-Bel-kala.

The possible infiltration of Babylonian divine symbolism into Middle Assyrian imagery coincided with the adaptation of other Babylonian iconographical features. This is reflected in the resemblance between the cloth patterns of the worshipper on the *kudurru* of Marduk-nādin-aḫḫe (fig. 8) and those depicted on the wall paintings from Kar-Tukulti-Ninurta, in particular trees made of palmattes arranged in a rosette-like tree.[171] A variety of historical, cultural and religious contacts existed between Babylonia and Assyria during the second part of the second millennium, facilitating the influence of Babylonian imagery on Assyrian iconography. These connections may have been enhanced by occasions such as the marriage of the daughter of Ashur-uballit I to a Babylonian prince, whose son, Kara-hardash, ruled Babylonia for two years, the conquest of Babylon by Tukulti-Ninurta I in 1235, the engagement of Babylonian workers in the building of Kar-Tukuilt-Ninurta, or Assyrian war expeditions to Babylonia under Aššur-Bel-kala. All of these events could have opened new channels of communication, adding to the already established commercial links between Assyria and Babylonia.[172]

170 Kühne and Röllig 1989.

171 Andrae 1925, 14–15, pl. 3; Smith 1965, 106, 115, fig. 145; Nunn 1988, 97–98, pl. 76. For tree terminology, see Collon 2001, 84.

172 Marcus 1991, 555–557; Freydank 1976–80, 455–456; Livingstone 1989, xv (introduction).

CHAPTER THREE

A SMALL YIELD

ANTHROPOMORPHIC REPRESENTATIONS OF DEITIES IN FIRST-MILLENNIUM BABYLONIA

3.1. Anthropomorphic Deities in First-Millennium Babylonian Monuments

Although no free-standing sculptures of Babylonian deities have come down to us,[173] this by no means implies that anthropomorphic cult images did not exist or were not worshipped in Babylonian temples and sanctuaries. As is clearly deduced from textual evidence, such as the "mouth-washing" or "mouth-opening" rituals (*mīs pî* and *pīt pî*), carried out for the induction of the Mesopotamian cult statue, divine human-shaped images were indeed used in Babylonian worship. As these cleansing-and-opening mouth rituals are well exemplified in first-millennium written sources, the existence of anthropomorphic cult images in contemporary Babylonia should not be questioned, in spite of the fact that actual renderings of such images are very rare. Indirect pictorial confirmation of the existence of large, cult anthropomorphic divine images in Babylonian shrines can be found in a unique Assyrian wall relief dated to Tiglath-pileser III, depicting a Babylonian cult statue carried away as war booty by Assyrian soldiers (fig. 120; see below, § 3.2 and Chapter 4, § 4.1.2).

The absence of cult images in the archaeological records may, of course, be explained by the chance of discovery and as a result of the perishable material, such as the *mēsu* wood, from which cult images were usually made in Mesopotamia. It can also be assumed that because these images were often made of, or coated with, precious materials, as attested by literary evidence, they were the first to be looted in the course of the numerous upheavals—their materials reused.[174] Nonetheless, the few actual Babylonian finds representing

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173 Seidl 2000, 106.

174 *CAD* 10/2, *mēsu* A, 34. My sincere gratitude is extended to Victor A. Hurowitz for his kind permission to refer to his unpublished manuscript, "What Goes In is What Comes Out—Materials for Creating Cult Statues", read at the Gruss

two-dimensional anthropomorphic portrayals of divinities discussed here confirm, on the one hand, that the basic perception of the divine in first-millennium Babylonia remained the same age-old Mesopotamian notion, which conceived the divine as having a human form. On the other hand, despite the above reservations regarding the selective nature of archaeological finds, the dearth of Babylonian finds depicting anthropomorphic deities may suggest a growing avoidance of visual articulation of such images.

Human-shaped divinities are rendered on a *kudurru* dated to the eighth year of Nabu-šuma-iškun, probably originally located in a temple where many of these monuments were found. A row of three deities wearing long elaborate dresses that cover their feet and tall oblong mitres are depicted on the monument (fig. 62).[175] The deities are shown standing on rectangular socles and facing right. Behind them are three high poles with elliptic upper parts, each decorated with a band, which may have been the symbols (*šurinnu*) associated with the three divinities. The deities stand on rather low podiums; the first two are decorated with a scaled pattern, which sometimes conveyed a mountainous area, considered to be divine dwelling in Mesopotamia. The dresses of the first two deities are decorated in front with large circles adorned with rayed stars. These two images are beardless, indicating their femininity, also signified by the circular object carried by the first figure. A protome of a lion attached to the first goddess in front of her identifies her with Ishtar, whose prominent status is probably also signified by the sickle sword held in her right hand. It is hard to establish the identity of the second goddess as she lacks specific signifiers. The third deity is a male warrior god,

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Colloquium, "Text, Artifact, and Image: Revealing Ancient Israelite Religion", on 27 April, 1998, at Phildelphia. For embellishing cultic images with precious material see, e.g., the image of Shamash installed at the Ebabar by Nabu-apla-iddina (Walker and Dick 1999, 62–63); lapis lazuli horned mitres (*CAD* 1, *agû* A, 154–155); or divine gilded garments (Oppenheim 1949). See also a non-provenanced horned mitre made of bronze, embedded with semi-precious stones (Muscarella 1981, 90–92).

175 Seidl 1989, 59–69, no. 103; 2000, 108. The authenticity of the non-provenanced relief depicting a female figure standing on a lion, tentatively identified with Ishtar (Oates 1991, 125, fig. 84), is questionable (Börker-Klähn 1982, 232, no. 270).

as indicated by his beard as well as by his bow and two quivers. Similarly to the first goddess, he is also depicted with his attribute fantastic beast—a winged, horned lion-dragon—reclining at his feet, which may perhaps signify him as Ninurta.[176] However, in this specific context of Babylonian imagery, the deity may also be associated with Adad or Marduk, as hinted by the lapis lazuli cylinder from Babylon, depicting a god wielding lightning bolts, which was rededicated to Marduk (fig. 67, see also fig. 7).

A somewhat sketchy rendering of a goddess is incised on a fragmentary ninth–seventh-century limestone stela(?), found in the Karaindash temple at Uruk (fig. 63).[177] The left-turned goddess stands on a cubic podium, clad in a long garment which covers her feet and wearing a horned-feathered crown. Both her arms are raised, palms open toward her body, in a typical Babylonian manner of blessing, following that of the suppliant goddess rendered through Ur III to early Kassite times in Babylonia. In front of the goddess there are three astral symbols: at the bottom a moon crescent, in the middle a small disc surrounded by four groups of small, straight lines—probably a variation of the Babylonian sun emblem, rendered with no disc, and at the top a star. The positioning of the star, signifying Ishtar, at the top, considered together with the find-spot of the monument—within a sanctuary located at Uruk, of which the goddess is regarded as a patron deity, strongly suggest that the depiction represents Ishtar. Although found within a temple and possibly used as a model for a better accomplished piece of art, the schematic nature of the figure may designate it as a non-formal representation of a divine human-shaped deity, which was not used as a focal cult image. To these one may add three clay moulds for making trial pieces for human-shaped divine figures found in a workshop in Ishtar temple at Babylon, which did not serve as cult images.[178]

The above-observed typical Babylonian features—the feathered crown; the garment concealing the feet; the decoration of circles on the dress; the two-handed gesture of the divine; or deities wielding two objects or attributes in each hand—are well manifested on the

176 Seidl 2000, 105.

177 Becker 1993, 61, pl. 50:795.

178 Seidl 2000, 109–114.

inscribed stela of Šamaš-reš-uṣur, dated to *ca.* 760 (fig. 64).[179] The monument was discovered in Babylon, having been brought there as booty by one of the military campaigns of the Neo-Babylonian kings Nabopolassar or Nebuchadnezzar II from Suḫu. It illustrates divine Babylonian anthropomorphic portrayal, mixed with Assyrian traits (e.g., the worshipper's headdress, which recalls the Assyrian royal tiara) and Syrian imagery.

The monument depicts a small figure of a devotee, probably Šamaš-reš-uṣur, the local ruler of Suḫu, standing before the figures of Adad and Ishtar. Both deities are identified by small legends, as well as by the attributes they carry. The goddess is shown holding a bow, signifying her as a warrior deity, surmounted by a star, which specifically identifies her as Ishtar. Adad is depicted wielding two lightning bolts, one in each hand. A fragmentary third deity, recognized as such by his or her dress, is shown behind the worshipper, and is identified by a third label as the West-Semitic goddess Anat. The combination of Assyrian, Babylonian and Syrian-Aramean elements may be explained by the original location of the monument—in Syria. Its original Syrian provenance also accords well with the hand gesture of the adorant, as well as the specific choice in divine anthropomorphic portrayal of the monument, since, as demonstrated below (Chapter 4, § 4.1), renderings of human-shaped divinities were more common during this period in Syria than in Babylonia or Assyria.[180]

Another kind of godly anthropomorphic portrayal is rendered on the earliest first-millennium Babylonian monument displaying a human-shaped deity—the stone-made Sippar Tablet dated to the thirty-first year of Nabu-apla-iddina II, a contemporary of Ashurnasirpal II (fig. 65). The Tablet, discovered buried in a clay box

179 Cavigneaux and Ismail 1990, 324; Börker-Klähn 1982, 218–219, no. 231 and see below Chapter 4, § 4.1.1.

180 It should be noted, however, that the Syrian divine anthropomorphic representations coincide with symbolic, non-anthropomorphic depictions of deities. See, e.g., Börker-Klähn 1982, nos. 240a–b, 250, 252, 255; PKG, pls. 353 (Arslantepe), 354b, 356 (Carchemish), 357 (Zincirli), XLIII (Ivriz); ANEP, figs. 499, 500; Kohlmeyer 1992 (Til Barsip), pl. 40; and compare *ibid.* pls. 38–39.

alongside two clay moulds bearing the same scene, documents the installation of the statue of Shamash in his temple, the Ebabbar, at Sippar. The inscription on the lower part of the monument reports, within a large narrative elaboration, the history and fate of the Ebabbar's cult image. It recounts that a new statue of the god was made and installed after the priest Nabu-nadin-šumi, who served under king Nabu-apla-iddina II, found an ancient model of the lost divine image. Thus, the new cult image was put in the temple after a period of some two hundred years, during which the image was absent and was replaced by a divine sun emblem.[181] The reinstallation of the god's anthropomorphic image instead of the divine symbol is *visually* conveyed above the inscription in an unusual composition for this period. Shamash, identified by a small label carved above the worshipper in the left part of the composition, is depicted facing left. He is shown enthroned under an arched scaly baldachin-like construction. The god is clad with a long dress carved with a wavy pattern; he wears a four-paired horned mitre shown in profile and carries a ring and a rod in his right hand.

This divine image differs radically from the above portrayals of Babylonian deities first and foremost in portraying Shamash in anthropomorphic form, since human-shaped depictions of Shamash in first-millennium Mesopotamia are very rare. Well-known monumental anthropomorphic depictions of the god are found on the four similar Maltai rock reliefs from the time of Sennacherib, where Shamash, identified by his winged sun disc surmounting his five-paired horned tiara and by his horse-mount, appears sixth in a row of eight deities.[182] Representations of human-shaped Shamash were not common in glyptic art either, and a rare example is shown on a Neo-Assyrian cylinder seal where the god is identified by the horse he sports (fig. 134). The unique portrayal of Shamash on the Tablet accords well with his anachronistic garment and headgear, which imitate late third-millennium and Old Babylonian representations and fit the many other

181 The Tablet was reburied and mentioned 250 years later by Nabopolassar, when the two clay moulds bearing the same scene were probably made. King 1912, no. 36; Walker and Dick 1999, 58–63; Hurowitz 2003a; Slanski 2003, 196–221. See also Frankfort 1996, 202; Hallo 1983, 13; Mettinger 1995, 48.

182 Boehmer 1976, 52–54.

archaisms derived from Ur III and Old Babylonian presentation scenes. These include: an enthroned god faced by three figures, including a suppliant goddess; the manner in which the first figure of the three small ones, identified as the priest Nabu-nadin-šumi, leads the king, shown in the middle, by the hand; and the two addorsed bull-men adorning the throne's panel.[183]

A few details, however, "disclose" that the scene was carved at least a millennium after the zenith of the iconographical traditions it attempts to emulate, that of Ur III and Old Babylonian periods. These include the gap in scale between the seated god and the figures facing him; the king's first-millennium Babylonian-type of clothing; and the depiction of the king being led by the priest and not by a suppliant goddess. The juxtaposition of three celestial symbols to the right of the deity's head is not common in the ancient prototypes, but is known from stelae of Nabonidus of a later Babylonian period (e.g., fig. 144). The supporting column of the structure (*timmu*) that houses the deity is modelled after a palm-tree trunk and is decorated with palm volutes at its base and capital, recalling Neo-Assyrian imagery. The entire scene takes place above four rosettes embedded within a register of wavy lines, representing the sweet subterranean waters of the *apsû*, also described on other first-millennium artifacts, such as the large votive cylinder of Marduk from Babylon (fig. 66). The two divine effigies at the top of the trunk holding the palmettes may resemble human heads or torsos depicted above the winged disc found in Neo-Assyrian iconography, although their portrayal as grasping a rope tied to the table is unusual. These figures are connected with the rayed sun disc (*nipḫu*), the emblem of Shamash at the centre of the scene, which is represented in a unique manner.

Indeed, the symbol of the sun disc and its placement within the composition is, surprisingly, the most telling visual feature of the Sippar Tablet with regard to the role of divine anthropomorphic portrayal in first-millennium Babylonian art. Although the human-shaped god is twice the height of the other figures in the scene, the feature that catches the eye of the beholder is the huge divine emblem in the focal centre of the scene, displayed frontally in contrast to the figures flanking it. This is an unparalleled iconographic exception,

183 Ehrenberg 1998, 127; Seidl 2001a (with bibliography).

which could be explained by the growing prominence of the non-anthropomorphic divine emblem in first-millennium Babylonian imagery (discussed below in Chapter 5).

3.2. Anthropomorphic Deities in First-Millennium Babylonian Glyptics

The visual features of feathered mitres, the long dress decorated with large circles, hiding the feet, rectangular or cubic socles decorated with a scaly design, deities wielding two attributes in each hand, and protomes of sacred hybrid beasts depicted as if reclining behind the godly figure, are exhibited on only very few artifacts, commonly considered as relating to glyptic finds. Well known are the two huge lapis lazuli cylinders found in Babylon, probably imitating ordinary cylinder seals, whose inscriptions testify that they were used as bodily adornments of the gods' images.[184] The cylinders were discovered, together with other luxury finds, in a hoard in a house lying under a Parthian building and were assigned to the Esagila temple of Marduk because of their votive inscriptions. The fact that the two cylinders were not intended to be impressed as regular cylinder seals is confirmed by their intaglio carving, which, like other ex-voto cylinder seals, was meant to be read and looked at from the cylinder itself and not from its impression. The larger of these cylinders (19 cm) depicts the figure of Marduk (fig. 66). According to its inscription the cylinder was set in gold and was dedicated to Marduk by Marduk-zakir-shumi, king of Babylonia in the ninth century, to be hung on the deity's neck. That a cult image of human-shaped Marduk was indeed worshipped in Babylonia is pictorially attested by the above-noted Assyrian relief of Tiglath-pileser III campaign to Babylonia, where the removal of a god holding a *marru*-like object is shown (fig. 120; § 3.1 and Chapter 4, § 4.1.2). The second, smaller cylinder (12.5 cm) portraying the image of Adad, as attested by the two lightning bolts he carries in each hand (fig. 67), was originally inscribed with a probable ninth-century legend assigning it to Adad. An inscription added later assigned it as the property of the Marduk of the Esagila, his temple at Babylon. Even later it was reinscribed with a dedication to Marduk, probably by Esarhaddon, king of Assyria. A similar figure of a deity

184 Unger 1953, 18 (with bibliography); Wetzel *et al.* 1957, 36–38, pls. 43–44.

engarved on another large, fragmentary cylinder was found in the Treasure House at Persepolis (fig. 68).[185]

The image of Marduk shown on the first cylinder is similar to his portrayal on the above-mentioned *kudurru* of Meli-Shipak (fig. 12). On both objects his body and hands are placed in similar positions, he wears a feathered mitre adorned with discs and is shown next to the *mušḫuššu*. Three details, however, distinguish the figure of Marduk on the cylinder from the one on the *kudurru*. On the latter the blade of the sword held by the god turns inward toward his body, whereas on the cylinder, the convex side of the blade is placed against his body. The god depicted on the cylinder is clad in the divine dress adorned with circles and carries a ring and a sceptre in his left hand, while on the *kudurru* he wears an archaic flounced garment and holds a sceptre club. Apart from these differences, the representations resemble one another and indicate a continuation of iconographic traditions from the twelfth to the ninth century in Babylonia. On the *kudurru* Marduk is depicted next to a lightning bolt, and on the cylinder he is placed over a podium decorated with undulations, representing the sweet subterranean *apsû* waters. Marduk's iconographical associations with both Ea and the storm god may explain the additions of these signifiers.[186] The probability that the figure of Marduk encapsulated those of other deities is implied by the two later inscriptions added to Adad's cylinder from Babylon (fig. 67), which, in spite of its clear allusion to Adad, was appropriated for adorning the cult image of Marduk.

A few additional anthropomorphic portrayals of deities appear on first-millennium Babylonian seals. For example, Ishtar, wearing a feathered crown, is shown trampling her lion in a manner recalling Old Babylonian prototypes, on a Babylonian-style cylinder seal.[187] However, as the seal is dated to the seventh century, one may consider some Assyrian influence on the seal, as is prevalent on other

185 Schmidt 1957, 60–63, pl. 2:263; Delaporte 1923, pl. 93:16 (A.830). Collon (2003, 130) identifies as Marduk the image of the running warrior god on a Babylonian cylinder seal attributed to Marduk-apla-iddina, on the basis of the axe shown hanging on his back (see below and n. 201).

186 *DDD* 543–544.

187 Collon 2001, no. 243.

contemporary seals demonstrating Babylonian and Assyrian combinations, which were probably the result of the Assyrian conquest of Babylonia during this period.[188]

A unique depiction of an anthropomorphic deity, who became rather common on Late Babylonian stamp seals, is that of Sin standing in a crescent, sometimes seen as if in a boat; this depiction is especially common on sixth-century seals, perhaps conveying the image of Sin as worshipped at Ur.[189] In few instances the theme is also depicted on Babylonian-style cylinder seals dated to the seventh or sixth century (figs. 69, 70).[190] As this subject matter was popular on Aramaic inscribed stamp seals (e.g., fig. 71) such specimens, especially those bearing Babylonian names written in Aramaic alphabetic script, may have been used mainly by Arameans living in southern Mesopotamia (fig. 72, 75).[191] The theme was also known in the western parts of the Assyro-Babylonian Empires,[192] attested by various finds, such as a late eighth-century impression from Carchemish (fig. 73), by post-canonic impressions from Tall Sheh Hamad (Dûr-katlimmu) on the lower Habur,[193] and by a non-provenanced, inscribed Moabite seal (fig. 74). These human-form portrayals of Sin, otherwise rare in first-millennium Mesopotamian imagery, may thus mirror older, second-millennium traditions prevailing in Syro-Hittite imagery, discussed above with regard to the cylinder seal from Samsat (fig. 34), and well attested in first-millennium monumental Syrian art.[194]

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188 Cf. Collon 2001, nos. 153, 237(?), 282–284; Porada 1948, 72; Collon 2003, 16*.

189 E.g., Jakob-Rost 1997, nos. 192, 195; e.g., MacGinnis 1995, 173 (B.12).

190 Collon 2001, 120–121, nos. 229–230, 231(?).

191 Ornan 1993, 60, figs. 23–26, 30–33; cf. Lipiński 1994, 186 (n. 167), 187, 192.

192 Collon 2001, 118.

193 Kühne 1997.

194 Keel 1994, 172–173. Cf. Carchemish and Malatya: Orthmann 1971, pls. 23:a, 40:a; Til Barsip: Kohlmeyer 1992, 99–100, pl. 40; ʿAli-Gör: Keel 1994, 183, fig. 9. See also a seventh-century plaque-shaped seal, typical of western manufacture, found at Nimrud, in which the enthroned moon god and his crescent-on-a-pole placed on a pedestal are shown side by side, Keel 1994, 167–168. The absence of anthropomorphic Sin from Assyrian glyptics and its western inspiration match the only Assyrian monumental depiction of the god,

The use of these seals may also reflect the proliferation of the cult of Sin in Babylonia, particularly under Nabonidus.[195] The rise in the status of the god is demonstrated by the choice of lunar symbols and their insertion in new glyptic compositions, which were previously unknown in Babylonia. Thus, at times (e.g., on the inscribed Aramaic seal of fig. 75), the god within the crescent is poised above a "cactus-like" bush, typical of Babylonian seals,[196] probably identified with a palm shoot. The composition of a winged astral symbol and a date-palm floral element was borrowed from Assyrian imagery, where it probably represented Ashur, and was appropriated by Late Babylonian glyptics by inserting the figure of Sin, instead of that of Ashur.[197]

In Aramaic-inscribed imagery conveyed on stamp seals Sin-in-the-crescent may appear winged and sporting a stylized tree flanked by *apkallu*s, which, in Assyrian iconography, often accompany a stylized tree, topped by a winged disc. The theme is thus rendered, for example, on a cylinder seal of *brkhdd* and on an uninscribed stamp seal kept at the Bibliothèque Nationale (figs. 76, 77). Appropriating the imagery of the god-within-the-winged-disc for anthropomorphic lunar symbolism reflects the rising popularity of Sin in the seventh century in the western parts of the Assyrian Empire.[198]

Representations of other divine anthropomorphic images become even more rare when turning to first-millennium Babylonian regular glyptic evidence. Like the above-mentioned avoidance of twelfth-century Pseudo-Kassite and contemporary Third Kassite cylinder seals from divine anthropomorphic renderings, cylinder seals of ninth-eighth century Babylonia also concentrated on themes other than human-shaped images of the gods. Following the trend evident in

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that of Sennacherib from Maltai mounted on a horned lion-dragon, our fig. 97. Boehmer 1976, 50; Börker-Klähn 1982, 211, nos. 207–210 (with bibliography). The god is distinguishable by the crescent surmounting his horned crown. His human-shaped representation and his prominent position—third in the row, behind Ashur and Mullissu—accord well with the Syrian-inspired portrayal of the other deities mounted on animals in the Maltai reliefs.

195 Beaulieu 1989, 43–65.

196 Porada 1947, 151; 1948, 94.

197 Ornan, forthcoming (b).

198 Cf. examples from Mount Carmel found in Israel and from Deve-Hüyük, Ornan, forthcoming (b); Buchanan and Moorey 1988, no. 94.

Middle Assyrian cylinder seals, these Babylonian cylinder seals focused on depictions of trees flanked by animals, fantastic creatures and combat scenes.[199] The inclination to refrain from human-shaped divinities continued into the Late Babylonian and Achaemenid periods, where the subject matter of devotion before divine symbols (discussed below in Chapter 5, § 5.2) became the predominant theme.

As some ninth–eighth-century Babylonian protagonists portrayed in combat scenes[200] are embellished with traits that may signal them as divine figures, such as the feathered crown, it may be argued that these figures portray major anthropomorphic divinities. An outstanding example of such renderings is a cylinder seal mentioning Eriba-Marduk, attributed to the Neo-Babylonian king Marduk-apla-iddina II, from the last quarter of the eighth century (fig. 78). The seal—depicting a running god wearing a feather crown, mounted on a scorpion-tailed monster shooting a bird-tailed one—conveys a close resemblance to ninth–eighth-century Assyrian glyptics. As the theme was prevalent in Assyrian glyptics, while rare in first-millennium Babylonia, one is inclined to interpret the seal as a late eighth-century Babylonian product inspired by Assyrian imagery. Another cylinder seal reflecting such inspiration is an additional seal of Marduk-apla-

199 Porada 1947; Seidl 2000, 106, 109; Wittmann 1992. For a rare Babylonian depiction of a human-shaped deity within a winged disc, see *ibid.*, 200–201, fig. 57. A unique rendering of anthropomorphic deities on a Babylonian cylinder seal is shown on a non-provenanced inscribed cylinder seal, on which goddesses are carried by a rickshaw (*ša šadadu*), perhaps representing an *akītu* procession (unpublished, Rosen Collection, New York).

200 The advent of combat scenes on Mesopotamian cylinder seals occurred at the beginning of the Early Dynastic period. These seals showed a bearded hero, with curly hair, subjugating two animals. During the Early Dynastic III period, the hero was occasionally replaced by a bull-man. At this stage, the combat representations became more complex and included at least two pairs of protagonists whose bodies sometimes crossed each other. The number of combatants on Akkadian seals was reduced, but their images became somewhat more monumental (Collon 1995a, 24–28). Combat scenes decreased during the Ur III period, and were reintroduced as a secondary glyptic motif in the Old Babylonian period. It was Middle Assyrian glyptic art that affected the articulation of the motif in first-millennium glyptic, mainly manifested on Babylonian cylinder seals (Collon 2001, 154–155, 165–166).

iddina II, portraying a fight between a lion and a figure holding a sickle sword; this seal probably also imitates Assyrian glyptics, like the Assyrian royal seal.[201] The combination of such themes on the above two high-quality cylinder seals of Marduk-apla-iddina II (and other similar ones), with reversed inscriptions meant to be read only from the seals and not their impressions, may imply that they were regarded as part of the paraphernalia of a temple.

Features like the sickle sword, or the garment's curved tiers, recalling the semi-circles adorning godly garments, may support the identification of these figures as divine (e.g. figs. 79–81). However, the figures engaged in these representations often lack clear divine signifiers; thus, one tends to consider all the variants of the combatants of these contest scenes as reflecting apotropaic figures—perhaps of lesser divinities engaged in a mythological episode—rather than major deities. Devices such as the feather crown, the sickle sword, or the peculiar dress adorment were perhaps added to these figures in order to raise their status by granting them signifiers of higher divinities, and not, it seems, to denote them as major deities. Even if these portrayals could indeed have alluded to images of prominent deities, the compositions in which they are shown—conveying movement and tension—differ from the static representations of the divine when depicted as a cult object (see, e.g., figs. 121, 123, 124, 128–131). Hence, it seems that these portrayals do not contradict the general inclination of first-millennium Babylonian glyptics to avoid representations of divine anthropomorphic cult images.

The lack of large three-dimensional statues depicting deities in first-millennium Babylonia accords well with the rare portrayals of divinities in two-dimensional representations, both in monumental and miniature art, and demonstrates that the paucity of such renderings is not an accident of survival. Rather, the nature of the archaeological evidence suggests that although anthropomorphic divine statues were

201 Collon 2003, 10*–13*, figs. 1, 2; Porada 1993, 578–581, fig. 46. For the Assyrian royal seal, see Sachs 1953. The Assyrian inspiration for the seal depicting a running shooting god is reinforced by the addition of the god within the winged "ring" depicted behind the former, cf. our fig. 78.

indeed kept in shrines,[202] following the custom of ancient Mesopotamian worship, there was some undercurrent reluctance in first-millennium Babylonia to render the divine in human form when shown outside the context of a temple. As most of the objects discussed above originated in temples and sacred precincts one may indeed conclude, as noted by Seidl,[203] that divine anthropomorphic representation was articulated mainly on objects that belonged to the sacred area or were used as the temple's paraphernalia. When, conversely, anthropomorphic-perceived divinities were articulated on artifacts that did not relate to the temple locality, their human-shaped articulation was usually eliminated.

202 Lambert 1990, 122.

203 Seidl 2000, 108–109. For the large ninth-century chalcedony cylinder seal of Mushezib-Ninurta assigned to the temple of Marduk at Babylon, see below, our fig. 136.

CHAPTER FOUR

REMOVED FROM OFFICIAL ART

ANTHROPOMORPHIC REPRESENTATIONS OF DEITIES IN FIRST-MILLENNIUM ASSYRIA

4.1. Anthropomorphic Deities in First-Millennium Assyrian Monuments

To date, no monumental free-standing sculpture of a major Assyrian deity has been recovered.[204] As noted above with regard to divine Babylonian imagery, this does not mean that anthropomorphic cult images did not exist or were not worshipped in Assyrian temples and sanctuaries, for their existence can clearly be inferred from textual evidence. Moreover, in contrast to Babylonia, the existence of anthropomorphic cult images is specifically attested in Assyria by ninth–eighth-century glyptic devotional themes portraying a devotee standing before a god or goddess in human form.

Large sculptures in the round, made of limestone, basalt, or alabaster, depicting human-shaped Assyrian deities, were found at Nimrud, Arslan-Tash and Khorsabad, dating from the reigns of Adad-nirari III, Tiglath-pileser III and Sargon II (e.g., figs. 82, 83).[205] Yet despite the fact that they were found in temple contexts, these statues do not represent major deities used as the focus of cult, but rather lesser divinities. This is indicated by their discovery at building entrances, where their apotropaic role of warding off evil, compared to that of monumental hybrids like the *aladlammu*, points to their lower status within the divine hierarchy. Their "inferior" rank is also indicated by their tiaras with one or two pairs of horns and by the fact that at times they are portrayed carrying the *ḫegallu*, the ancient Mesopotamian motif conveying abundance. This motif is represented by a small jar from which water runs, which is generally carried by lesser deities. Other containers held by these images, e.g., the sculptures from Nimrud (fig. 83), may hint at their function as divine servants.

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204 Seidl 2000, 106.

205 Strommenger 1970, 18–24, 28, 31.

The possibility that the lack of large sculptures representing principle Assyrian divinities may not have been merely an accident of survival is suggested by a similar dearth of small bronze figurines portraying deities. In spite of a strong first-millennium Assyrian industry of bronze figurines, most of the images portrayed through Assyrian bronze statuettes depict apotropaic entities and not major gods or goddesses.[206] Moreover, the postulation that the few divine anthropomorphic bronze figurines in our possession mainly served as furniture components[207] accords well with the overall amuletic nature of Assyrian bronze figurines. Notwithstanding this, a possible dating of an example found in the Heraion at Samos to the final quarter of the eighth century[208] may be in line with our suggestion (below, Chapter 4, § 4.1.2) that anthropomorphic renderings of deities became more common in the late eighth century, especially during the reign of Sennacherib. The tendency of Assyrian imagery to portray supernatural apotropaic beings or lesser deities, rather than images of prominent gods and goddesses, is further supported by first-millennium clay figurines. These figurines were found in temples and private houses, often buried in room corners, below thresholds, or elsewhere in the building, in order to protect it and its inhabitants. At times they were discovered laid in clay boxes at various sites in Mesopotamia. Even when these figures are rendered as having an entire anthropomorphic body they do not represent prominent deities, but rather lesser divinities such as the above-noted figure carrying the *ḫegallu* jar: Ninshubur, a minor god who serves as a divine messenger, also imbued with an apotropaic nature, or perhaps Lulal, portrayed as a figure with a raised fist.[209]

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206 Curtis 1988b; Braun-Holzinger 1984, 73.

207 Curtis 1994a, 6–8.

208 Börker-Klähn 1973, 41–42, pl. 17 (Samos B 165); Curtis 1994a, 2–4, 6. Cf. also Muscarella 1981, 98. Assigning some of the bronze godly figurines to other workshops than Assyrian (e.g., Urartian, *ibid.*, 2, n. 4 with bibliography) may corroborate our conclusion that divine anthropomorphic portrayals were more at home in first-millennium North Syrian imagery than in contemporary Assyrian art.

209 Rittig 1977, 36–50, 226–230; Green 1984, 82; Wiggermann 1992, 60, 63–64, 94, 146–148; 1994, 224.

4.1.1. Syrian Inspiration

Representations of human-shaped deities on Assyrian monuments prior to Sennacherib are not common. Nevertheless, a few monuments discovered to the north and west of the Assyrian heartland manifest a few anthropomorphic renderings of deities. A faded anthropomorphic image of a god is reconstructed by Börker-Klähn on the rock relief at Mila Mergi, north-west of Dohuk in northern Iraq. This probable godly figure is hardly visible, but according to the drawing offered by Börker-Klähn, the deity faces left, standing on a socle (fig. 84a). However, if indeed there was originally a carving of divine figure in front of whom the gesturing king stands, identified by his tall truncated headdress, it has been covered by an inscription of Tiglath-pileser III, commemorating the seventh campaign of Tiglath-pileser III against the Ulluba in 739 (fig. 84b).[210] Human-shaped gods, identified by horned mitres, are depicted on four reliefs engraved on rock boulders at Karabur, 25 km. south-east of Antakya, Turkey, each figure manifesting only slight variations.[211] One of these reliefs (no. 2, fig. 85) portrays the god facing left, wearing a large sword and raising his right arm in a gesture of benediction, engaged in a devotional scene, in which a worshipper standing on a rather high socle is shown. Between the figures of the god and the devotee, six divine symbols are carved. Partly because of the supposed similarity to the theme depicted on the Mila Mergi, the reliefs of Karabur, which bear no inscriptions, were attributed to Tiglath-pileser III. However, since the adorant on the Karabur relief does not wear the royal Assyrian head covering, it has been suggested that he represents the *turtānu* Šamši-ilu, the commander in chief, who was the dominant authority in the western part of the Assyrian Empire during the first half of the eighth century.[212] During this period the power of Assyria in the territories west of the Euphrates declined, a situation that strengthened local

210 Börker-Klähn 1982, 198–199, no. 170. Postgate 1973, however, does not mention or illustrate a godly figure, but only a king and divine symbols. Tadmor 1994, 111–116, 270.

211 Börker-Klähn 1982, 220–221, nos. 236–239.

212 Taşyürek 1975, 172–180; Kuan 2001, 137–146; Lemaire and Durand 1984, 108.

rulers and enabled them to install provincial monuments, usually demonstrating a mixture of Mesopotamian and Syrian elements.[213]

The possibility that the reliefs of Karabur may reflect a local North Syrian tradition is supported by the characteristics of the site itself, which suggest an open-air sanctuary,[214] not unknown in North Syria and South-East Anatolia. Karabur recalls sites such as Yazilikaya, although on a much smaller scale. Indeed, the existence of a cave and a small seasonal spring within the area of the rock outcrops of Karabur supports the impression that the site was selected—perhaps by Šamši-ilu—because it fitted the local tradition of natural open-air cult shrines. The site therefore manifests a continuation of local cultic traditions, in which anthropomorphic divine representation was common.

Another monument on which human-shaped deities are portrayed, is the above-mentioned stela of Šamaš-reš-uṣur, which was unearthed in Babylon but was originally erected in Suḫu on the mid-Euphrates, *ca.* 760 (fig. 64). Although the images of Adad, Ishtar and probably Anat depicted on the monument clearly reflect features typical of first-millennium Babylonian imagery, the scene betrays Syrian iconography not only in the very presence of anthropomorphic deities, as noted above, but also in some of its details. Thus, the manner in which Šamaš-reš-uṣur raises his closed right fist, with his thumb pointing to the gods, differs both from the Assyrian supplication gesture of pointing a finger and from the Babylonian motion of "nose rubbing". This gesture, indicating awe and respect, was common in Syrian and south Anatolian imagery (cf. fig. 41), implying that Šamaš-reš-uṣur can, indeed, be considered as an Aramean ruler.[215] An additional devotional scene from the Middle Euphratus involving an anthropmorphic deity is rendered on a damaged, mid-eighth-century inscribed stela found in a major building at the island of ʿAna, probably portraying Ninurta-kudurri-uṣur, son of Šamaš-reš-uṣur and governor of Suḫu. The ruler, known for reestablishing the cult of Anat

213 Compare below, Chapter 6, § 6.1.2, the stelae of Bel-Harran-Bel-uṣur and Mushezib-Shamash (our fig. 179) (Börker-Klähn 1982, 219, nos. 232, 233).

214 Taşyürek 1974, 47.

215 Magen 1986, 49, 51; Mayer-Opificius 1995, 335–336, 338.

in this area, is shown standing before the image of the goddess (fig. 86).[216] A human-shaped god accompanied by five divine symbols is depicted on a rock relief located near Eğil, north of Diyarbakir, Turkey, redated to the reign of Tiglath-pileser III or Sargon II (fig. 87).[217] A human-shaped deity is also shown on a fragmentary limestone plaque found at Sheh Hamad (Dûr-katlimmu), dated to the second half of the eighth century. The only surviving features are the upper part of a horned-feathered-crown topped by a star within a disc, a raised left arm and the upper part of a quiver of a divine figure, accompanied by five divine symbols.[218]

The raised arm of the deity depicted on the fragmentary orthostat from Dûr-katlimmu recalls the smiting position, typical of the imagery of the storm god present already on Middle and Late Bronze Syrian artifacts.[219] Indeed, the axe carried by the male deities on the Dûr-katlimmu monument and on the Eğil rock relief commonly appears as an attribute carried by the storm god, often shown together with the lightning bolt, in Syrian and Syrianized monuments, such as on a relief of the Long Wall at Carchemish (fig. 88) and on the stela from Tell Ashara (fig. 89).[220] The Syrian origin of the axe as an attribute of the storm god is further supported by the portrayal of a cult image of a storm god, taken as war booty from a western province, depicted on a wall relief of Tiglath-pileser III from the Central Palace at Nimrud (fig. 117). As the sites where the above-mentioned monuments were found are located beyond the Assyrian nucleus heartland,[221] and three of them are from the Habur region and further west, the very anthropomorphic representations of these deities—which mark an exception among contemporary Assyrian monuments—may also have

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216 Abdul-Amir 1997, 220, fig. 10; Brinkman 2001, 525–526.

217 Bartl 1999–2001.

218 Kühne 1984, 173, fig. 66.

219 Collon 1972; Porada 1984.

220 See also Orthmann 1971, 238–239, pls. 5:b (found at Babylon but originating in northern Syria), 38: e (Kürtül), f (Körün), 53: c (Till Barsip), 58: d (Zinjirli). The axe carried by the god standing on a bull on Impression C of Essarhdon's Vassal Treaties of (our fig. 25) may serve as an added argument for the western affinity of this impression, as discussed above.

221 Kühne 1995, 69–70.

been influenced by Syrian imagery. Although non-anthropomorphic representations were common in Syria during the Late Bronze and Iron Ages,[222] in North Syria portrayals of deities in human form were most common, probably in areas exposed to Hittite and later Neo-Hittite/Luvian influence. Monuments such as stelae from Til Barsip and Arslan-Tash, dating from the first half of the eighth century and representing anthropomorphic Ishtar of Arbela and Adad (figs. 90, 91), indicate that this convention was known in Syria prior to the Tiglath-pileser III conquests. The rather meagre number of monumental Assyrian anthropomorphic divine depictions, in contrast to the plethora of similar representations in Syria, also supports the suggestion that the rendering of anthropomorphic deities in monumental art is in itself to be considered a Syrian trait which inspired eighth-century Assyrian iconography.

A probable earlier, ninth-century portrayal of an anthropomorphic deity depicted on a Neo-Assyrian monument is rendered on a non-provenanced stela, bearing an unpublished cuneiform inscripition that mentions Aššur-būnāya-uṣur. The latter may be identified with the *rab šāqê*, chief butler, a *limmu* serving under Shalmaneser III.[223] One of the four sides of this cubic monument bears a bearded god wearing a horned headdress surmounted by a disc, seated on a backless throne decorated with bull-headed finials. Two fish-*apkallu* demons, each depicted on different sides of the monument, flank the deity from back and front. Not dissimilar to the above eighth-century monuments, the theme conveyed on this monument may also have been inspired by Syrian imagery of anthropomorphic deities. This postulation may be sustained by the resemblance of the visual layout of the monument—each participant occupying a separate side of the cubic monument—to that of the stela from Terqa (Tell Ashara), noted above (fig. 89), which demonstrates a mixture of Syrian and Assyrian elements.[224] These probable Syrian traits may have been absorbed by Assyrian artisans through encounters with Syrian monuments while

222 Mettinger 1995, 84ff.

223 *Guide to the Collection* 2002, 108, 111; Millard 1994, 82.

224 Masetti-Rouault 2001, 91, 95–97, 110–114.

campaigning in the Middle Euphrates region and beyond during the reign of Shalmaneser III.[225]

Although the subject matter of a devotee worshipping a human-shaped deity is, as shown above, attested most commonly in renderings originating outside the main Assyrian cities, it is also exemplified on artifacts from the city of Ashur itself. One of these finds, a small gypsum stela (perhaps a cult object) depicts a bare-headed adorant gesturing toward a bearded god who carries a quiver and a long sword and wields a bow in his left hand. Between the two figures three astral divine symbols are shown (fig. 92).[226] The second object, a large glazed orthostat found in secondary use in a private house at Ashur, represents a worshipper gesturing before a bearded god holding a ring and a mace-headed sceptre in his left hand, while raising his right arm in a blessing gesture. Above the deity's horned-feathered mitre is an eight-rayed disc accompanied by three divine astral emblems, below which, above the adorant's head, is a locust (fig. 93).[227] On both artifacts, dating from the late eighth century, the worshippers lack the royal head gear. Hence, the monuments cannot be regarded as royal, as suggested also by the find-spot of the glazed orthostat; considering the size of the latter finds, they can be regarded as objects used as a focus of a private, domestic cult.[228] The details of these two items, however, differ in that whereas the god on the glazed orthostat stands on a socle, as is common in other renderings, it is the devotee depicted on the gypsum stela who is poised on a podium (cf. fig. 85). While the divine socle may be identified with the KI-TUŠ, an elevated cult place, the podium of the adorant may represent a brick, which the *kalu* priest is instructed to place before the divine image. In both cases, as demonstrated by Seidl, the divine and mortal do not stand on the same ground.[229]

225 Kuan 1995, 5–7 and *passim*; Roaf 2001, 358, fig. 2:d.

226 Börker-Klähn 1982, no. 242.

227 Jakob-Rost *et al.* 1992, 189, no. 127.

228 Compare fig. 99.

229 Seidl 2001b; Börker-Klähn 1973, 60, figs. 9, 10.

4.1.2. Anthropomorphic Deities under Sennacherib

The inclination to depict the divine in anthropomorphic form is best attested during the reign of Sennacherib and clearly marks the imagery articulated in Assyria under this king as outstanding. With this regard, however, Sennacherib's inscription from Nineveh, pertaining to a representation of the (human-shaped) god Ashur chasing Tiamat, applied on the doors of the *akītu* house, should be considered with caution. Although such a theme may, indeed, be regarded as exceptional to the imagery of this period, it may, on the other hand (as shown below), fit the conjectured iconography of sacred buildings and temples, of which we do not yet have sufficient evidence.[230]

Major deities portrayed in human form assigned to Sennacherib were displayed on at least six rock reliefs, dated to 689, from Bavian, *ca.* 60 km. north of Musul. Here, on the cliffs overlooking the course of the Gumel Su, which served as the source of water brought by Sennacherib to Nineveh, rock-cut reliefs were found, adorned with the figure of the king gesturing before divine figures or symbols.[231] Of the 14 reliefs of Bavian, anthropomorphic deities are best exemplified on the "Great Relief" and on two reliefs carved at the "Gate" of the canal head (figs. 94–96). Despite the fact that these three reliefs present a similar theme, namely, the adorant king gesturing before his major god(s), the three monuments differ in their compositional layout. The double, identical figure of the king flanking two central deities which face one another—Ashur and his consort Ninlil/Mullissu—are represented in a symmetrical arrangement on the "Great Relief" (fig. 94, cf. the Seal of Destinies, below, fig. 131). The side relief of the monument from the "Gate" of the canal head also displays a symmetrical composition, but here the three figures are frontally rendered and it is Ashur who is shown as the pivotal image (fig.96). However, on the upper register of the larger relief from the "Gate" of the canal head, it is the royal devotee who occupies the central position in an asymmetrical scene (fig. 95).[232] The deities on the

230 Pongratz-Leisten 1994, 207–208; Uehlinger 2003, 291.

231 Börker-Klähn 1982, 206–208, nos. 186–188.

232 The lower register of the larger "Gate" canal head relief portrays a hero holding a small lion, recalling the huge figures from Khorsabad, flanked by two *aladlammus*, usually placed at building entrances. Displaying these two

"Great Relief" and on the larger canal head monuments are mounted on animals and hybrids, while the figures of Ashur (and the king) on the smaller canal head monument are placed on high socles.

Two other versions of the devotional scene of Sennacherib, rendered on monuments from Bavian, are traced on the rock reliefs at Faida and Maltai, also connected to the irrigation system conducted by Sennacherib. The badly preserved rock reliefs at Faida, 50 km. north of Mosul, probably represent a procession of six anthropomorphic deities.[233] Much better preserved scenes are depicted on four rock reliefs found in Maltai, on the Dohuk–Musul road, not far from a water source.[234] Of the four almost identical Maltai monuments, the third is the best preserved one (fig. 97a). The monument is carved with the double figure of the gesturing king, positioned at the front and rear of a row of five gods and two goddesses turning left and mounted on sacred animals or fantastic beasts.

The variety of compositional arrangements manifested on the monuments of Bavian, Faida and Maltai, and their elaborate themes conveyed through the depiction of at least one or more worshipped deities, may indeed indicate that during the reign of Sennacherib the monumental display of anthropomorphic divinities became common in royal religious imagery. This conclusion may be further sustained by a few monuments and smaller finds displaying the same convention, found within the heartland of Assyria and not only at its periphery, as the above-noted monuments dating from before Sennacherib. Thus, a reconstructed inscribed stela from Ashur reporting on the *bit akītu* may be attributed to Sennacherib, as it also depicts the formula of the king facing the divine couple, Ashur and Ninlil/Mullissu, reconstructed as standing on the backs of animals or hybrids (fig. 98).[235]

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registers one on top of the other conforms with an older convention describing an architectural construction: the lower part represents the antechamber, while the upper part stands for the inner space—the deity's sanctuary where the cult images were placed. Cf. Beck 1994, 369 (with bibliography).

233 Boehmer 1997, 248–249, pls. 38–44.

234 Bachmann 1969, 23–27, pls. 25–32; Boehmer 1976; Börker-Klähn 1982, 210–211, nos. 207–210.

235 Börker-Klähn 1982, no. 205.

Two human-shaped deities shown one behind the other, in front of whom stands a gesturing worshipper, are depicted on a fragmentary clay plaque found at Ashur.[236] Of the second deity only the lower part of a footstool decorated with apotropaic hybrids and the deity's right foot remain, indicating that it represented an enthroned figure; thus, by analogy to the Maltai relief, one may identify Ashur on a *mušḫuššu* (with a smaller winged beast at his feet) and enthroned Ninlil/Mulissu mounted on a lion. In spite of the fragmentary state of the plaque, the figure of Ashur is quite clear. He wears a long sword, carries a sceptre in his left hand and a sickle sword in his right. The three-petalled knob surmounting his divine feathered mitre recalls the one on the latter stela from Ashur (fig. 98), supporting the attribution of the piece to Sennacherib. The devotee rendered on the clay plaque differs, however, from the adorants depicted on the above examples, as he does not wear the royal headdress. Nevertheless, since he is clothed in royal garments he may be identified as a crown prince.

Another portrayal of a human-shaped god discovered at the city of Ashur is rendered on a large gypsum wall plaque found in a private residence, depicting an armed god equipped with a long sword and a quiver, holding a mace-headed sceptre in his left hand while raising his right arm in a blessing gesture (fig. 99).[237] The winged and horned lion on which the god stands, often associated with Ashur, may support the attribution of the plaque to Sennacherib.

Since mounting deities on animals and fantastic beasts became common during the time of Sennacherib, in whose reign the theme was introduced into Assyrian monumental art as a result of Syrian influence,[238] this visual convention may, at times, serve as a criterion for attributing other objects to this period. Thus, a bronze amulet-

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236 Andrae 1977, 230, 232, fig. 210; Moortgat 1969, 155, pl. 281 Madhloom 1970, 79, pl. lx:4.281; Magen 1986, 62; Curtis 1995, 80, pl. 15:f. Cf. Curtis 1988b, 86, figs. 80–82.

237 Börker-Klähn 1982, 233, no. 243; Jakob-Rost *et al.* 1992, 178, no. 115. As it has been suggested that the plaque originally belonged to one of two niched larger rooms, and considering the height of the object (47 cm.), it may indeed be seen as a private cult object (e.g., compare the size of the Burny Relief, Curtis and Collon 1996).

238 Winter 1982, 367; Reade 1977, 42.

shaped plaque inscribed with a dedication of property to Nabu, may also be included in the present discussion as possibly being dated to the time of Sennacherib.[239] The obverse of this plaque (fig. 100) is adorned with four anthropomorphic deities, two of which are posed on hybrid mounts and thus probably hint at a late eighth–early seventh-century date. The portrayal of three of the four deities on the plaque as forming a procession, known as yet only from the royal imagery of Sennacherib, would also support the above attribution. Nevertheless, the scene does differ from other contemporary renderings of divine processions in terms of its content. In the latter, a worshipping king gesturing toward a row of deities is shown, whereas a devotee is absent from the bronze plaque, and the row of deities face a principal god—a rare representation in first-millennium Assyrian art.[240] Worship of an enthroned goddess mounted on a lion-dragon is rendered on a small, non-provenanced bronze amulet (fig. 101). The theme of worshipping an enthroned goddess and its association with the above devotional scenes assigned to Sennacherib suggest a similar attribution. However, the Assyrian *ubana tarāṣu* hand gesture of the adorant, rather than the Babylonian supplication gesture of *appa labānu* ("nose rubbing") adopted by Sennacherib, may suggest a late Sargonid date for the amulet.[241]

Another portrayal of human-shaped divinities discovered at Ashur, assigned to Sennacherib by an inscription, is rendered on a basalt basin found in the Ashur temple, adorned on its four corners with the images of lesser divinities holding the *ḫegallu* jar with running water (fig. 102).[242] The juxtaposition of these figures on the basin with human-shaped, fish- *apkallu*[243] implies that here too the *ḫegallu* carriers should be considered apotropaic or lesser divinities.

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239 Postgate 1987.

240 See, however, Moortgat 1940, no. 597; and cf. Uehlinger 1993.

241 Braun-Holzinger 1984, 85, no. 288, opts for a Sargonid date. Magen 1986, 62; but see Brinkman and Dalley 1988, 95–97.

242 Andrae 1977, 33–34, fig. 16; Haller and Andrae 1955, 72–71, pl. 63b.

243 The fish-*apkallu*, identified as such by ritual texts, are mentioned in written sources as early as the third millennium, although visually represented only from the Kassite Period (Green 1984, 85; Matthews 1990, 61, nos. 142–144).

The above-mentioned monuments of Sennacherib manifest an exceptional trend in first-millennium Assyrian imagery, not only because they demonstrate an inclination to depict anthropomorphic deities, but also because the divinities depicted on these renderings are markedly larger than the king. This is clearly attested when compared with the rare examples of anthropomorphic deities subsequent to Sennacherib, exemplified on three stelae of Esarhaddon, on which divine figures are mounted on their beasts. Two of these stelae, discovered in Til Barsip (Tell Ahmar), the capital of Bit Adini, on the eastern bank of the Euphrates, show the king gesturing toward a row of deities mounted on animals (e.g., fig. 103). These themes clearly resemble the composition of Sennacherib's Maltai and Bavian reliefs. The third stela was found in Sam'al, modern Zinjirli, located at the foothills of the Amanus mountains in south-east Turkey.[244] It was erected between 671 and 696 upon Esharhaddon's return from his campaign in Egypt, and it demonstrates some recession from anthropomorphic portrayal, as four divine emblems are shown alongside these images (fig. 104). The representations of these stelae of Esharhaddon, the largest among the Neo-Assyrian stelae known, convey Egyptian inspiration and differ from the monuments attributed to Sennacherib in the gap in scale between the adorant king and the divine representations—both anthropomorphic and non-anthropomorphic. This variance in dimensions accords well with the common portrayal of the Assyrian king on the other royal stelae—clearly accentuating the rising status of the Assyrian king when shown in official visual renderings.

The divine figures appearing on Sennacherib's monuments are mounted on animals—a common convention in Syria and Anatolia that penetrated Assyrian monumental art at that time, even though it was already known on Middle Assyrian cylinder seals (figs. 29–31) and in ninth-century Assyrian glyptics.[245] The manner in which this theme appears on the Esarhaddon's monuments differs, however, from that of the themes depicted on Sennacherib's monuments. In the latter the divine bodily dimensions are larger than those of the king, while in the former, the divinities are much smaller than the king—who

244 Porter 2001.

245 Collon 2001, 90, nos. 153, 152; Herbordt 1992, 193, pl. 1:1.

occupies the entire height of the monument and dwarfs the accompanying divine entities. The large area occupied by the royal figure is similar to that on other Assyrian stelae where the king worships only symbols (below, Chapter 6, § 6.1.1 and figs. 173–177). By minimizing the divine figures, monumental Assyrian art aims, once again, at elevating the royal image in the eye of the beholder.

Another unique trait of the imagery developed under Sennacherib is the visibility of the divine pair of Ashur and Ninlil/Mulissu (figs. 94, 98, 131), which is matched by the representation of the earthly couple—the king and his consort (fig. 132). Whereas depicting elite women in a public display could be considered the outcome of Syrian inspiration,[246] the emphasis on the divine couple in contemporary royal imagery should be considered an inner Assyrian novelty. This trait and the other pictorial characteristics are to be associated with the broader iconographic innovations introduced by Sennacherib into Assyrian art. Among these are the expansion of the sculptured relief over an entire wall; omitting the central inscription while adding more epigraphs; granting four legs instead of five to the colossi guarding palace entrances; reducing the display of a schematized tree; and incorporating new types of protective demons, previously not represented in palatial decoration.[247] The most outstanding novelty of Sennacherib narrative display is probably the introduction of large-scale wall reliefs representing construction projects. The visual renderings of these construction activities accord well with the king's special attention to the topic specifically illuminated by textual evidence, in which Sennacherib boasts about his construction works in a manner never previously recorded in Assyrian royal propaganda.[248] However, whereas it is hard to attribute religious significance to most of these visual innovations, the choice of an anthropomorphic pictorial version of deities, like the adaptation of the Babylonian *appa labānu*

246 Ornan 2002. One wonders whether the Syrian/Aramaic origin of Naqia-Zakûtu, Sennacherib's consort and the mother of Esarhaddon, may have encouraged the absorption of Syrian themes during the reign of Sennacherib. See, however, Melville (1999, 16) for the difficulties in resolving the Syrian/Aramaic origin of Naqia-Zakûtu.

247 Winter 1981b, 24–25; Russell 1991, 180–187, 202–115; 1998, 165.

248 Tadmor 1999, 61; Russell 1991, 94–116.

gesture by Sennacherib and the representation of the king in close proximity to Ashur and Ninlil, implies a change in religious iconography.

Replacing the older Assyrian praying gesture of *ubāna tarāṣū* "pointing a finger (to the god", e.g., fig. 101) in favour of the Babylonian "nose-rubbing" gesture (cf. figs. 92–97) is first referred to during the reign of Sargon. But it was only during Sennacherib's rule that the pictorial debut of the Babylonian gesture was made, as part of Sennacherib's efforts to make "Assyria a second Babylonia". The Assyrian kings adopted the gesture, adding a shoot as a device of cultic purification held by the king, thus accentuating the pious-cultic message of the portrayal of the king worshipping his god. This modification in cultic custom is connected with other religious reforms carried out by Sennacherib, the most notable of which is the building of the *akītu* temple in honour of Ashur, whom the king attempted to liken to Marduk.[249] Among the indications of Sennacherib's appropriation of the religious symbolism of Marduk to Ashur is not only the alteration Marduk with Ashur in the Assyrian version of the Epic of Creation[250] and in the above-noted Ninevite text referring to the embellishment of the *bit akītu* doors with Ashur chasing Tiamat. The consistent portrayal of Ashur mounted on a *mušḫuššu* on some of his monuments and on his royal seal used by Esarhaddon on the Vassal Treaties (figs. 94, 95, 97, 98, 131) also points to this appropriation. The tradition continued into the reign of Esarhaddon, when the *mušḫuššu* was shown as a hybrid mounted by Ashur, and perhaps by Nabu, on a stela from Zinjirli (fig. 104).

In conclusion, it should be emphasized that in contrast to the king's stelae and rock reliefs, major human-shaped deities do not appear in his palaces. Like the stone reliefs of other Assyrian palaces, those of Sennacherib also reveal a reluctance to depict major human-shaped god and goddesses. This is exemplified by the depiction of a divine chariot, probably that of the god Ashur, without the actual image of the god on the above-noted slab 14 of the Lachish siege.[251]

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249 Reade 1977, 42; Lambert 1984, 89; Magen 1986, 62. Cf. Dalley 1994, 49–50; Pongratz-Leisten 1997, 245–246, 251–252.

250 Frame 1992, 57–59.

251 Uehlinger 2003, 290–291 (bibliography therein).

4.1.3. Anthropomorphic Deities on Wall Reliefs

The only known large-scale anthropomorphic depiction of a major deity in Neo-Assyrian wall reliefs is that of Ninurta, found at the entrance to the smaller, northern shrine (C) of the temple of Ninurta at Calah-Nimrud, the city of which he was the patron deity (fig. 105).[252] This unique monumental portrayal of a major deity is also exceptional in representing the god as a winged figure. Generally, only minor protective divinities are depicted winged in Assyrian art, while prominent gods and goddesses, continuing earlier Mesopotamian iconography, are shown wingless.[253] Nonetheless, the divine wings on the relief from the temple of Ninurta do not signify a protective and lesser divinity,[254] as the figure in question carries in each hand a lighting bolt, which is not held by minor protective divinities. As this monumental representation of a major deity is unique, the addition of the wings here is enigmatic. However, as wings attached to images of major deities were not uncommon in Hittite and Syrian imagery in the second millennium (above, Chapter 1, §§ 1.3–1.4, figs. 23, 32, 33) it may be postulated that the depiction of Ninurta in this case may also have been inspired by pictorial conventions common west of the Euphrates (cf. fig. 88).

The specific type of lightning bolt carried by the god, typified by its central pointed bolt, is also shown within the mouth of Ninurta's subdued hybrid, on a cylinder seal attributed to Nimrud (fig. 140). This further supports the identification of the winged image on the relief under discussion with Ninurta. The two representations of Ninurta—on the monumental wall relief and on the small glyptic item—complement each other. While in the monumental display the god is shown engaged in a fight and hence actively "uses" his main belligerent attributes,[255] in the glyptic representation he is shown in a victorious pose after the battle. Following Wiggermann's postulation,

252 Layard 1853, pl. 5; Moortgat-Correns 1988.

253 See, however, Collon 2001, 141, fig. 4, and our figs. 79 and 134, and Curtis and Collon 1996.

254 Braun-Holzinger 2001, 524.

255 Cf. our fig. 143.

Ninurta is mounted on the hybrid, his former enemy, to convey the defeat of his divine opponent. As a defeated foe, the hybrid not only merges with the icon of the triumphant god—serving as the god's mount—but also appropriates his master's traits and properties, in this case his weapons. The former enemy may at times even appropriate the god's power, by replacing his image and becoming his symbol.[256]

Although this representation of Ninurta did not serve as the deity's main cult image, as implied by its positioning at a side chapel and probably by the nature of its combat scene, Moortgat-Correns believes it is very similar to the main cult statue of the god, which stood inside the small shrine.[257] The god is portrayed in an active pose within a composition conveying movement, strength and tension not unknown in contemporary glyptic renderings. He is engaged here in a rare monumental mythological combat, raising his two arms while leaping in his typical wide stride. Winged and holding two lightning bolts in each hand, he is shown chasing the Anzu bird, represented by the bird-tailed, horned lion-dragon that stole the tablet of destinies from Enlil.[258] This depiction of Ninurta is the sole representation of a major deity among the other slabs found at the temple of Ninurta and among the other non-provenanced reliefs attributed to the temple. The only other supernatural figures found in the temple portray figures of a*pkallu* benevolent demons.[259] It is these demons and other apotropaic creatures, and not the figures of the prominent deities, which also govern the representations of the Assyrian palace reliefs.

The lack of other portrayals in Assyrian monumental art of large-scale, human-shaped anthropomorphic deities probably stems from the fact that most of the monumental evidence at our disposal originates from secular buildings, mainly palaces, and not from temples. Based

256 Wiggermann 1994, 226–227.

257 Moortgat-Correns 1988, 117–123. For the cult statue of Ninurta as described by Ashurnasirpal II, see Annus 2002, 42 (with earlier bibliography).

258 Foster 1995, 115-131.

259 The non-provenanced slabs are relatively small in size, usually bearing 26 line inscriptions with large signs, stretching from shoulder to midcalf of the sculptured figure. Some are said to show traces of fire. These peculiarities led to the suggestion that they originated in the temple of Ninurta (Strearns 1961, 23, 44–46, pls. 6, 58, 60; Merhav 1970, 14–15).

on the figure of Ninurta displayed in his temple and on the basic conception of Mesopotamian divinities as having a human form, and assuming that cult images of anthropomorphic deities indeed existed in Assyrian shrines, it is conceivable that additional remains of temple decoration will provide more depictions of large-scale, prominent anthropomorphic deities.

Confirmation for the latter conclusion can be found in the above-mentioned Sennacherib inscription from Nineveh, in which the king reports about the mythic visual depictions applied on bronze bands that were attached to the doors of the *akītu* house, representing the god Ashur drawing his bow against Tiamat.[260] Although this verbal description may indeed fit the exceptional imagery prevalent under Sennacherib, its thematic resemblance to the representation of the Ninurta temple, as well as the location of both scenes in sacred buildings, should not be overlooked.

When turning to the portrayal of divine figures in palatial decoration we face, however, a totally different situation. In spite of the immense evidence recording wall decorations of Assyrian palaces, there are only a handful of representations of major Assyrian gods and goddesses. Moreover, the specific character of the deities depicted in palatial reliefs, the nature of the compositions in which they are shown and the small scale of some of these portrayals are all features that demonstrate a certain avoidance of representing major gods and goddesses in Assyrian palaces. An unusual example of a large-scale human-shaped god is depicted in a devotional scene on a heavily reconstructed mural, found in a reception room of Residence K at Khorsabad, where Sargon and apparently the crown prince, Sennacherib, are shown in front of a probable image of Ashur (fig. 106).[261] The rarity of this theme in palatial buildings suggests that the building was not used as a royal seat, but rather as the residence of a high official. It follows, then, that the refrain from depicting full-scaled divine figures in late eighth-century Assyrian monumental decoration is not to be regarded as a rigid rule, but instead as an acceptable convention.

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260 Pongratz-Leisten 1994, 207–208.

261 Loud and Altman 1938, 85, pls. 88–89.

The other anthropomorphic renderings of major deities on Assyrian palatial reliefs can be divided into three categories on the basis of the role and nature of the images portrayed. The first category includes representations of human-shaped Ashur rising from or standing within a winged disc.[262] Following the theme first attested on the Broken Obelisk of Aššur-Bel-kala (above, Chapter 2, § 2.4, fig. 54) and later on a glazed tile of Tukulti-Ninurta II (fig. 107),[263] human-shaped Ashur appears on ninth-century wall reliefs of Ashurnasirpal in the North-West Palace at Nimrud. In these representations the deity—fused with the non-anthropomorphic emblem of the winged disc—is shown hovering above the figure of the king.[264] The most conspicuous depiction of Ashur in this manner is on the upper part of slab 23, above the schematized tree flanked by the double figure of the king, where the god is shown raising both hands in a blessing gesture (fig. 108). As this slab was located on the focal wall, in front of which stood the royal throne, this image of Ashur received the intensive attention of the onlooker, only rivaled by the larger figure of the king, depicted on the same wall and seen in person seated on his throne. A similar portrayal of Ashur, this time holding a bow in his left hand and raising his closed right fist, is shown within a similar composition depicted on slab 13 of the long southern wall, overlooking one of the main entrances leading to the throne room (fig. 109).[265] The choice of portraying the god as holding a bow in this case corroborates his identification with Ashur by stressing his belligerent nature.[266] Standing in the winged disc, Ashur is also engaged in the narrative scenes depicted on the southern wall of throne room B (slab 3), where he is shooting an arrow above the similarly fighting king, who stands in his war chariot (fig. 110). Holding the bow in his left hand while raising his right hand in blessing, as is the rule in Neo-Assyrian art, Ashur is depicted in slab 5 above the king, similarly

262 On the debate on the meaning of the winged disc, see Ornan forthcoming (b) (bibliography therein).

263 Andrae 1925, 27, pl. 8; Frankfort 1939, 211.

264 Layard 1849, pls. 13, 21, 25.

265 Layard 1849, pl. 25; Winter 1981b, 4–7.

266 Cf. Mayer-Opificius 1984, 200; Parpola 1993, 165, n. 25.

rendered in a non-belligerent stance, holding a bow in his left hand and an arrow in his right (fig. 111).[267]

The portrayal of the god in the above examples with only a partially human-shaped body—his head and torso being anthropomorphic, and his lower body concealed by a tail-like design—may reveal some concession to visual anthropomorphism. The decline in anthropomorphic imagery hinted at by these portrayals is further suggested by later Assyrian monumental depictions of the winged disc, in which human traits are totally absent. The small scale of the depictions of Ashur discussed above further points to the "diminishing" character of these variants of human-form images of the god, since despite the fact that Ashur's icon retained its uppermost position in these scenes—an indication of importance in Mesopotamian art, it is the larger double royal figure (and the stylized tree) that attracted the spectator's attention upon entrance to the throne room of King Ashurnasirpal.

The small scale of these figures of Ashur brings us to the second category of human-shaped prominent deities portrayed in palatial reliefs. These latter representations, however, contrast with those of Ashur in the fact that they are depicted in a very small scale, at times barely observable on various objects, mainly of military nature, which were integrated in the narrative display of the reliefs. These artifacts consist mainly of high standards (*šurinnu*) decorated with divine figures attached to war chariots. Although these *šurinnu* were considered objects of cultic veneration,[268] in the context of the palatial wall decoration they were generally not displayed in such a role, but appeared together with many other objects which augmented the realistic message of the sculptured themes. The deities in these representations, then, were selected not for their own merit, but rather by virtue of their role as protectors and as being in charge of military activities; hence, they are to be regarded as secondary protective elements of war equipment.

A rather small figure of a running war god shooting an arrow appears on a small oval plaque attached to a battering ram on lower slab 4, depicting the battle of Kashiari, near the end of the southern

267 Layard 1849, pls. 13, 21.

268 Pongratz-Leisten, Deller and Bleibtreu 1992.

wall of throne room B in the North-West Palace (fig. 112). On upper slab 4, depicting a campaign to Damdammusa, a god shooting an arrow while standing on a leaping bull is shown within a roundel of a war standard carried on a chariot, and an identical standard is shown on upper slab 6, possibly depicting a campaign to Mount Nisir (fig. 113 and cf. fig. 140). A belligerent god associated with bulls also appears on a war standard of Sargon at Khorsabad (fig. 114).[269] A warrior god drawing his bow is shown on the yoke pole of the second, probably divine, chariot shown on slab 14, behind the enthroned god and left to the Assyrian camp, from room XXXVI of the South-West Palace of Sennacherib, representing the siege of Lachish.[270]

The small warrior god depicted on the chariot standards of Ashurnasirpal and Sargon was replaced by the image of Ishtar, goddess and patron of wars,[271] on accessories of war chariots depicted in wall reliefs of Ashurbanipal.[272] Substituting the male warrior deity with the image of Ishtar in these reliefs may reflect the increasing status of this goddess during the reign of Ashurbanipal and his intimate relationship with her. This relationship, probably continuing that of his father Esarhaddon with the goddess, was attested in prophetic texts, where she was described as the goddess with four breasts, the good wet nurse of the king.[273] In a relief of Asuhrbanipal from court XIX of the South-West Palace of Sennacherib, the goddess is portrayed on a fan-shaped chariot pole ornament set on the yoke pole, on which she gazes to the front, clad in a long dress and mounted

269 Layard 1849, pls. 19, 22, 27; Madhloom 1970, 13–14, pls. 10:1, 11:3,4; Winter 1981b, 4–5; Albenda 1986, pls. 113–114. For the identification of these figures, see Holloway 2001, 257–258 and bibliography therein.

270 Barnett, Turner and Bleibtreu 1998, pls. 346, 348 (bottom); Madhloom 1970, pl. IV 2; Uehlinger 2003, 289.

271 Pongratz-Leisten 1994, 81. Uehlinger (*ibid.*) suggests that the erased figure of a probable anthropomorphic deity, depicted on the fan-shaped chariot pole of the second chariot on slab 14 of the Lachish reliefs, may have been that of Ishtar.

272 See, however, a shooting deity shown in a vignette attached to the chariot box of Ashurbanipal in room XXXIII of the South-West Palace of Sennacherib (Barnett, Turner and Bleibtreu 1998, pls. 308–309).

273 Livingstone 1989, 34; Parpola 1997, xxxvi, 40–41.

on three(?) lions.[274] In the same manner but standing on two lions, she appears on another fan-shaped ornament adorning the horse's neck of a war chariot, found in room M in the North Palace of Ashurbanipal at Nineveh. In this portrayal she clearly represents a cult image, as the worshipper-king stands next to her.[275] The goddess also appears on a decorated yoke pole of a royal hunt chariot, depicted on the relief of the Great Lion Hunt in room C of the North Palace of Ashurbanipal, where she is shown surrounded by a rayed circle (fig. 115),[276] mainly attested on small objects, such as seals and jewels.

The possibility that these representations of Ishtar reflect actual military accessories adorned with her image is sustained by textual references and by an Assyrian helmet found at Nimrud, decorated with the figure of encircled Ishtar.[277] Two fan-shaped bronze chariot poles from the seventh century, similar to the ornaments depicted on Ashurbanipal reliefs, found at Zinjirli (e.g., fig. 116), may demonstrate the role of a female deity in protecting war chariots and their charioteers.[278] As both finds were engraved with a naked deity associated with lions, they may portray the Syrian version of the Assyrian goddess. Blinkers and frontlets of horses, which in the first millennium were used for riding and not only as draught animals,[279] were often adorned with figures of nude females, at times accompanied by lions. Such objects, made of ivory or bronze, were found at various ancient Near Eastern sites, such as Nimrud, Tell Tayinat, Gordion or Samos, further stress the protective role of female divinities in times of war.[280] Small anthropomorphic deities are also

274 Layard 1853, pl. 42; Winter 1988, fig. 131; Barnett, Turner and Bleibtreu 1998, pls. 206–207; Russell 1991, 150, fig. 75. A supernatural figure is also seen on a fan-shaped chariot pole ornament depicted on a wall relief of Sargon at Khorsabad (Albenda 1986, pl. 115). Since it is an animal-headed figure, however, it probably represents a lesser divinity, rather than a major deity.

275 Barnett 1976, pl. 35; Reade 1977, 34–35, pl. 3:a (BM 124946).

276 Reade 1977, 37, pl. 3:b (BM 124867); Barnett 1976, pl. 8; Ornan 2001a, 239–240.

277 Dalley 1991, 125; Dezsö and Curtis 1991.

278 Von Luschan 1943, 79–80.

279 Dalley 1995, 418.

280 Orchard 1967, nos. 35, 136–139; Young 1962, 166–167, pl. 46: fig. 24; Kantor 1962, 104, fig. 10:B; Jantzen 1972, pl. 52; Winter 1988, 196–197.

shown as parts of furniture depicted on wall reliefs. As they are often portrayed together with figures of demons and hybrids, their identification as lesser deities of an apotropaic nature, rather than as major deities, is most probable.[281]

The third category of human-shaped deities portrayed on Assyrian wall reliefs consists of divine images, whose proportionally large scale can be estimated in relation to the human figures carrying them. These idols do not attest to anthropomorphic representations of Assyrian gods and goddesses, however, but rather to the existence of such statues among the foreign peoples conquered by Assyria. The images are shown resting on bars placed on the shoulders of the Assyrian soldiers, who carry them away as war booty in scenes conveying Assyrian triumphs. Four deities in human form—three goddesses and one god, identified as a storm god by the lightning bolt and axe he holds—are depicted on a relief of Tiglath-pileser III from the South-West Palace at Nimrud (fig. 117).[282] Three small statues of deities with raised arms, one represented standing within a schematic shrine, carried by Assyrian soldiers, are shown on a relief of Sennacherib, found in room X of the residential suite adjacent to court VI of the South-West Palace at Nineveh (fig. 118).[283] Eleven divine anthropomorphic statues are depicted on three slabs from court LXIV, in the west corner of the latter palace of Sennacherib, presumably used as the residence of his consort, Tashmetum-sharrat (fig. 119).[284] A rectangular "box", possibly representing a shrine model, is being carried with the idols, transferred by the Assyrian soldiers.

As these reliefs represent towns in the western part of the Assyrian Empire,[285] the above notion suggesting that anthropomorphic cult

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281 Curtis 1995, 79–81, pls. 14: f, g, 15, 16: a–d (with bibliography). For lesser deities guarding an offering table, see the Babylonian cylinder from Persepolis (our fig. 68).

282 Layard 1849, pl. 65; Barnett and Falkner 1962, xxiv–xxv, 29–28, pls. XCII–XCIII.

283 Layard 1853, pl. 50; Barnett, Turner and Bleibtreu 1998, 13, 25–26, 74, pl. 143; Russell 1991, 53, fig. 35.

284 Layard 1853, pl. 30; Barnett, Turner and Bleibtreu 1998, 36, 128, pls. 451–453; Russell 1991, 169–170; Börker-Klähn 1973, 43–44.

285 The removed cult statues depicted on the relief of Tiglath-pileser III from Nimrud (our fig. 117) are attributed either to the North Syrian town of Unki

images were specifically common in these areas is supported. The fourth example of rendering a removal of an anthropomorphic cult image, found in the Central Palace at Nimrud, differs from the above three depictions in that it represents the events following the campaign of Tiglath-pileser III to Babylonia in 731, visually signified by a fallen palm tree (fig. 120). The slab depicts a large cult statue of a bearded god, wearing a fringed garment and a horned mitre carried by Assyrians, in front of whom are female captives begging for mercy. The god is holding a spade-like object, which may be recognized as the *marru*; thus corroborating the identification with Marduk.[286]

Although only one cult statue is depicted in this relief, its large scale is sufficient to reaffirm the notion that in spite of the scarcity of actual finds and meagre pictorial renderings of anthropomorphic deities in first-millennium Babylonia, cult images indeed existed in Babylonian shrines, as attested by written sources. Furthermore, as suggested by the eagle-shaped icon carried away by the Assyrian soldiers, alongside the human-shaped god, anthropomorphic and non-anthropomorphic cult images may have coexisted in Babylonian worship.

The void created by the avoidance of representation of large, prominent anthropomorphic deities in Assyrian palace reliefs was not left without any replacement. It was filled with numerous representations of apotropaic figures and lesser divinities, as is well demonstrated by the remains of the 250 years of Assyrian palaces.[287] That these beings were conceptualized with human form is implied not only by some of their visual traits, but also by the use of *ṣalmu*—

(Tadmor 1994, 240; Na'aman 1999, 403) or to Gaza at Philistia (Wäfler 1975, 30, n. 116; Barnett 1985, 21–23; Uehlinger 2002, 104–115, with bibliography). The episode depicted in room X of the South-West Palace at Nineveh relates to the capture of Ashqelon (Barnett 1985). For the display at court LXIV as representing a western campaign, see Russell 1991, 171. For a reconstruction depicting the removal of idols from Samaria, see Uehlinger 1998b.

286 Layard 1849, pl. 67A. Barnett and Falkner 1962, xvi, 17, pl. VII. Tadmor 1994, 239–240, 272.

287 Kolbe 1981.

"image, likeness, effigy"—mostly in relation to figures with anthropomorphic features and not to animals.[288]

These figures dominated palatial wall reliefs alongside narrative scenes, reflecting, on the one hand, the religio-magical role of the architectural decoration and, on the other hand, its political aim, conveyed through realistic and historical pictorial renderings. The relationship between these two types of wall decoration was extensively modified throughout the history of the Assyrian palace wall reliefs. It moved from an intensive display of demons in the North-West Palace of Ashurnasirpal at Nimrud to a much smaller number of these beings represented in the South-West and North Palaces of Sennacherib and Ashurbanipal at Nineveh. It ranged from the positioning of demons in focal points within the palace—such as behind the royal throne in room B of the North-West Palace—to the position of figures that merely guarded at entrances in later palaces. The proximity of the demons to the figure of the king was also modified in the course of the existence of the Assyrian palace reliefs, from being represented very close to the royal body in various compositions of Ashurnasirpal's palace, to later royal figures, which were separated from the images of the demons. This latter development does not convey a lesser need of the protection offered by demons; instead, it highlights a greater awareness of the status of the king. For example, when the king and demons are shown next to each other they compete for the eye of the beholder; when separated from one another, the king—shown alone—gains the full attention of the spectator. In light of this interpretation, one may understand the removal of large-scale representations of major gods and goddesses from Assyrian palatial decoration, which in this context was aimed principally at exalting the monarch.

Although the term *ṣalmu* signifies various kinds of images with anthropomorphic traits, some variance in the extent of anthropomorphism in the renderings of demons and lesser divinities is apparent. For instance, although combinations of human organs and an erect stance, together with theriomorphic elements, typify many of these demons and lesser divinities, few of them are represented with an entirely human form. An example of this type occurs in Khorsabad:

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288 Postgate 1994, 178–179; *CAD* 16, *ṣalmu*, 78–85.

two huge figures who clutch small lions to their bodies, standing at the entrances of façades A and n, in proximity to *aladlammus*. Judging by their position at other entrances—between two human-headed winged *apkallus* and in front of a schematized tree—one may also include in this type other figures, holding a lotus and two closed buffs.[289] Entirely anthropomorphic demons are also included among the above-mentioned apotropaic figures introduced in the monumental imagery of Sennacherib: the *laḫmu* with six curls and Lulal, a probable warrior deity linked with domestic animals, shown with a raised arm.[290] Similar demons appear on door jambs of the North Palace of Ashurbanipal, mainly in the vicinity of throne room M. These include human-shaped figures, perhaps Lulal, with a raised right arm, posted at the entrances to rooms M, K, F and B, and a figure with three lines of curls and holding a spear, in room B, probably representing *laḫmu*.[291] A rare representation of demons, identified as human-shaped *sebetti*, is depicted at the entrance to court O, leading to the throne room of the North Palace.[292] These guarding figures wear a three-paired horned and feathered mitre, wield an axe in their raised right hand and hold a dagger in their left. They were probably completed by four figures, which had originally stood at the other side of the entrance. Elsewhere in Neo-Assyrian imagery, the *sebetti*, representing the Pleiades of the constellation Taurus and symbolizing the seven gods of fate, are rendered only non-anthropomorphically—by seven small circles. This emblem made its advent in Nuzi and Middle Assyrian glyptics and reached its peak in Neo-Assyrian art, when fortune telling and soothsaying became a prominent element in the Assyrian Empire.[293]

289 Albenda 1986, pls. 16–17, 19, 35–36, 40, 53–54, 59 and figs. 7–8, 6–25.

290 Russell 1991, 180–183 (with bibliography).

291 Barnett 1976, pls. 4, 21, 31, 37.

292 Gadd *apud* Barnett 1976, 48, pl. 38.

293 Seidl 1989, 103; van Buren 1945, 78ff.; Black and Green 1992, 162; Herbordt 1992, 103; Tadmor and Tadmor 1967, 72, n. 23; Reiner 1995, 86, n. 355.

4.2. Anthropomorphic Deities in First-Millennium Assyrian Glyptics

In sharp contrast to the meagre representations of major human-shaped deities in Babylonian imagery and in monumental Assyrian art—especially in palatial decoration, Assyrian glyptic renderings abound with such images. On Assyrian cylinder seals, however, only a few compositions render these deities on their own, without the presence of mortal adorants, as exemplified on the cylinder of Ashur-bissuni, which portrays Ea facing Ishtar, accompanied by a fish-*apkallu* (fig. 121).[294] Anthropomorphic deities portrayed on their own are more common on stamp seals,[295] first appearing in the last quarter of the eighth century, when writing in Aramaic became more commonplace.[296] The more frequent occurrences of such representations perhaps had to do with the smaller field left for visual renderings on this type of seals. Glyptic renderings of deities by themselves are to be included in the first thematic group of first-millennium Mesopotamian glyptic art, offered in the Introduction, which focuses on supernatural representations consisting of human-shaped divine figures and fantastic beings, as well as divine symbols of floral motifs and animals, omiting the representations of mortals.

The much more prevalent subject matter in which anthropomorphic deities are shown on Neo-Assyrian cylinder seals is a devotional theme, most common on seals of court officials (e.g., figs. 122, 124), on which an anthropomorphic deity faces a gesturing worshipper, also apparent on stamp seals (e.g., fig. 123). Cylinder seals displaying this theme were used from at least the late ninth century until the reigns of Sargon and Sennacherib. Such scenes were particularly popular on glyptic specimens dated to the first half of the eighth century.[297] They adhere to the third group of first-millennium Mesopotamian glyptics, noted in the Introduction, in which fantastic and realistic traits mingle. The adorant, at times perhaps representing

294 Moortgat 1940, no. 597; Watanabe 1993, 122: 8.6; Collon 2001, no. 276.

295 Cf. Jakob-Rost 1997, nos. 188–189, 195–198, 201, 204–214; Buchanan and Moorey 1988, nos. 363–364, 358.

296 For Aramaic writing in Assyria from *ca.* 720, see Zadok 1991, 26.

297 Watanabe 1999; Winter 2000b, 68–74.

the seal owner, is shown gesturing before a standing or enthroned deity, sometimes mounted on an animal or fantastic creature (figs. 122–125, 129–130). Occasionally more than one deity or one worshipper is shown (e.g., figs. 125, 129, 130). These seals were worked mainly in the drill technique and are generally dated to the ninth–eighth centuries, although they were still used in the first half of the seventh century.[298]

The ninth–eighth-century drilled Neo-Assyrian cylinder seals originated, as noted above, in a small group of late-second-millennium Middle Assyrian linear cylinder seals.[299] However, the meeting between divinity and mortal, rendered on these seals and sealings, had deep roots in Mesopotamian art in general, and in glyptic art in particular. A few examples appear already on late Early Dynastic cylinder seals, but the theme in fact originated in Akkadian times, continuing into the Ur III and Old Babylonian periods. The scene gradually ceased to appear on glyptic finds from the beginning of the second half of the second millennium.

Whereas the theme did not yet dominate glyptic art in the Akkadian period, during Ur III times it became the most common composition, typified, at times, by the replacement of the divine figure with the king. During the Old Babylonian period the petitioner, probably the seal owner, was often shown carrying an animal offering.[300] Since the Ur III period the composition— termed the presentation scene—included, in addition to the main divinity and the devotee, a suppliant deity, who led the adorant to his god.[301] This personal deity, usually the goddess Lama, disappeared from first-millennium imagery, where the worshipper represents himself before the deity (cf. the anachronistic display of the Sippar Tablet, above Chapter 3, § 3.1, fig. 65). It has been postulated that the absence of the intermediate deity reflects the growing distance between the deity and

298 Porada 1948, 81–85, nos. 678–703; Buchanan 1966, 114, nos. 603–604, 630–633, 636–637; Teissier 1984, nos. 210–222, 236–237; Watanabe 1999; Herbordt 1992, 193, 199, pl. 1:1, 5, pl. 2:1–10.

299 Matthews 1990, 113–114.

300 Haussperger 1991; Winter 1986; 1987.

301 Haussperger 1991, 106–110, 132–134, 157–158, 173–174, 219–220.

his worshippers in the first millennium.[302] However, the central concept—an encounter between a deity and a mortal—present in the early descriptions is also extant in first-millennium scenes, and may therefore be considered a continuation of an age-old Mesopotamian visual convention.

Among identified female deities depicted on Neo-Assyrian seals, a few were especially popular: the warrior Ishtar, mounted on a lion, at times surrounded by a nimbus (figs. 122, 124–125 the second goddess); Gula, the healing goddess, standing or enthroned above a dog, at times probably holding a scalpel and a tablet (e.g., fig. 125); and a naked or partially dressed goddess (figs. 126-128).[303] Whereas the portrayals of Ishtar and Gula are to be considered "at home" in Assyria, renderings of a naked or partially-clad goddess, at times winged, may have been the result of Western inspiration. In spite of the fact that glyptic finds depicting this figure were found in Assyria, monumental Syrian representations of this figure, such as those found in Carchemish (fig. 88), Malatya, and ʿEin Dara, may support this suggestion.[304] As noted above (Chapter 1, §§ 1.3–1.4, figs. 22, 23) regarding second-millennium representations of this figure, it seems that in first-millennium renderings as well, the goddess probably adhered to the portrayals of "the great one", Shaushka, equated with Assyrian Ishtar.

Some male deities are portrayed on Assyrian cylinder seals in the role of warrior gods mounted on various animals, among them the bull, or hybrids, such as the lion-dragon, *abūbu* or a *mušḫuššu* (e.g., figs. 129, 130, 140).[305] The identification of these figures with major gods such as Adad, Ninurta, Ashur, or Shamash is difficult not only because they are mounted on various mount animals and hybrids, but also because they hold diverse attributes. A more secure identification can be postulated only when a figure carries a specific attribute, such as a lightening fork, signalling Adad (cf. figs. 208, 216, 217).[306] Yet a

302 Frankfort 1939, 105.

303 Collon 1994; 2001, 122–129. 138–140; Dezsö and Curtis 1991; Ornan 2001a.

304 Delaporte 1940, 19, 27, pl. XXIII 2(J); Danmanville 1962; Woolley 1952, 165–166, pls. 37a, 40; Alexander 2002, 14–15, fig. 3.

305 Collon 2001,130–137, 141–147.

306 Cf. Delaporte 1910, no. 360.

number of major Neo-Assyrian male deities have been identified on contemporary seals. Among them is Ea, identified by the goat-fish on which he rides (fig. 121).[307] The god Ninurta is also portrayed as a cult image, as exemplified by fig. 140, which illustrates a now lost cylinder seal, probably from Nimrud. This seal is inscribed with the legend of Aššur-šumu-iddin, a *šangu* priest of Ninurta and Adad.[308] The god is mounted on a lion-dragon which spits a lighting bolt. As suggested above, this type of bolt was appropriated by the hybrid after it had become the subdued servant of Ninurta, its awe highlighted by the bolt. Another god who appears on these seals is Nabu. However, although the wedge symbolizing this god became quite common on Neo-Assyrian cylinder seals and on stelae during the reign of Adad-nirari III, his anthropomorphic depiction was much less common in Assyrian glyptics. He is shown in only a few representations, signified by the wedge carried in his right hand and a clay tablet held in his left, as well as by the *mušḫuššu* upon which he is mounted, as can be seen on a few eighth-century cylinder seals. On one of these seals, a Neo-Assyrian seal from Borsippa, Nabu's main cult centre near Babylon, a wedge is shown in front of the god, who holds the tablet in his left hand (fig. 129). Such renderings recall Nabu's portrayal on the amulet-shaped bronze plaque noted above (fig. 100).[309]

Although it has been postulated that the warrior god carrying a mace may have been connected with either Ashur or Marduk,[310] clear identifications of these gods in Assyrian glyptic art are hard to establish. A unique glyptic rendering of Ashur, accompanied by his consort, Ninlil, is found on the above-noted, now lost cylinder seal of Sennacherib dedicated to Ashur—the Seal of Destinies of Ashur—

307 Collon 2001, nos. 125, 293; Frankfort 1939, pl. xxxiii:j.

308 Moortgat-Correns 1988, 129–130; Parker 1955, 110, pl. 21:1 (impressed tablet from room k of the Governor Palace, Nimrud); Delaporte 1910, no. 355; Porada 1948, no. 692.

309 Seidl 1998a, 25–27; Parker 1962, 29–30, pl. 10:3; and Herbordt 1992, 196, ND 197 (impression on a tablet found in the temple of Nabu in Nimrud). Nabu in our fig. 129 is mounted on a scorpion-tailed lion-dragon, probably identified with *abūbu*, a mount hybrid usually associated with Ninurta (below).

310 Collon 2001, 130.

impressed on the Vassal Treaties of Esarhaddon (fig. 131).[311] The asymmetrical composition, similar to a monumental representation of Bavian (fig. 94, 95), is achieved by depicting the king facing Ashur and turning his back to the divine female consort.

The image of Ashur may be identified with the figure of the principal god, defined thus by his place in the composition—facing a procession of three deities—on the above-noted amulet-shaped bronze plaque (fig. 100). The god is shown mounted on a *mušḫuššu*, sacred to Marduk and Nabu, but used in the imagery of Sennacherib as the mount of Ashur, who lacked traditional imagery of his own and was typified by appropriating visual traits of other major deities.[312] Like Ashur, one can find securely identified renderings of Ninlil/Mulissu, on the Seal of Destinies. A probable depiction of the goddess may be seen on the above-noted small bronze amulet, depicting an enthroned goddess mounted on a lion-dragon (fig. 101).

Whereas depictions of Ashur, fully represented, are thus only securely identified on a few items attributed to Sennacherib, his partially anthropomorphic portrayal within the winged disc is well attested on ninth–eighth-century cylinder seals, recalling his portrayals in monumental art. A good example of such a depiction occurs on the seal of Mushezib-Ninurta, *šangu,* priest of Shadikanni (Arban), whose grandfather Šamanuha-šar-ilani was mentioned by Ashurnasirpal II in 883 (fig. 133). Shadikanni is identified at Tell ʿAgaga on the Habur south of Hasska. The seal itself was revealed at Tarbiṣu, Sherif Khan, located on the Tigris, only six km. north of Nineveh.[313] Although the antropomorphisized winged disc, at times shown with two additional busts (e.g. fig. 134) is demonstrated on eighth–seventh-century seals (e.g., figs. 204, 205), an inclination to avoid the depiction of anthropomorphic form on seventh-century seals is implied by Collon "as a general rule, the earlier the piece, the more of the god's body is shown".[314]

However, the winged disc does not allude exclusively to Ashur in first-millennium Assyrian imagery, as most often it represents the sun

311 Wiseman 1958; George 1986, 140, 142.

312 Lambert 1984, 89.

313 Collon 2001, 86–88, no. 151; Winter 2000b, 65–68.

314 Collon 2001, 80, 86–88, nos. 150, 151.

god Shamash. Identifying the emblem with the sun deity is indeed possible in cases where the symbol appears in conjunction with specific features signalling Shamash imagery, for example, supported by atlantid scorpion-men (*girtablullus*) or bull-men (*kusarikkus*; e.g., figs. 134, 136, 205), fantastic creatures that were associated with Shamash in earlier Mesopotamian imagery.[315] The sun god shown in fig. 134 is mounted on a horse, also alluding to Shamash, as demonstrated on the Maltai rock relief (fig. 97). The consideration of horses as divine sacred beasts and mounts is also implied by Assyrian references to pairs of (chariot?) horses that were sacrificed to Ashur. A contemporary, though non-Assyrian, association between chariot horses and divinities affiliated with Shamash is implied by the name (epithet?) of Rakib-El, the principal deity of the ninth–eighth-century Aramaean dynasty at Zinjirli, and his emblems: a winged disc and a chariot yoke, selected for the official seal of the kingdom of Sam'al (fig. 135; cf. figs. 181, 182).[316]

An unusual portrayal of two anthropomorphic gods is rendered on a large Assyrianized chalcedony cylinder seal found in the *Perlendepot* hoard uncovered below a Parthian house at Babylon (fig. 136).[317] That this seal, like many of the other precious objects with which it was found, originally belonged to the Esagila temple of Marduk is suggested by objects such as the two huge lapis lazuli cylinders, discussed above, that were inscribed as being part of the temple paraphernalia. According to its inscription, the chalcedony seal belonged to Mushezib-Ninurta, the same *šangu* priest of Shadikanni who owned the above-noted cylinder seal discovered at Tarbiṣu (fig. 133). The seal from Babylon is dedicated to Shamanuha, city god of Shadikkani, identified by Unger as the male deity facing right,

315 Wiggermann 1994, 226; Moortgat 1940, nos. 598, 599; Herbordt 1992, pl. 13:1–8; Collon 2001, nos. 207–211.

316 Boehmer 1976, 52; Schroer 1987, 286–292, 295, fig. 118; Ornan forthcoming (b). Cf. Herbordt 1992, 227, no. 87 (a seventh-century impression depicting a *girtablullu* and an equid); Black and Green 1992, 104. The horse's role as a divine signifier may also be implied by plausible figures of horses on Marduk's belt depicted on the votive cylinder from Babylon (fig. 66).

317 Moortgat 1940, no. 600; Unger 1953, 16–20; Wetzel *et al.* 1957, 38–39, no. 23, pl. 46:p; Watanabe 1993, no. 9.1.

bestowing a bow upon the probable (damaged) figure of Mushezib-Ninurta, who stands in front of him. Another divine image, identified only by his garment (as most of his body is missing due to a fracture), is seen behind Mushezib-Ninurta. According to Unger, this figure represents the personal god of Mushezib-Ninurta, who is shown, once again, next to the slightly bowing man. These four figures are depicted below a huge winged disc, of which only the edge of the left wing was survived. The provenance of the seal in Shadikanni accords well with its unique composition and specifically with the portrayal of the two human-shaped gods, which was common, as suggested, in Syrian imagery. As reconstructed by Unger, the seal was apparently forcibly removed from the temple at Shadikkani to the Esagila temple of Babylon, probably during the reign of Nabopolassar. The human-shaped images of Shamanuha and the "personal" god could indeed fit other cultic objects adorned with anthropomorphic deities, which were part of cultic paraphernalia and were kept within the temple of Marduk.

As with the Babylonian combat scenes (figs. 78–81), human-shaped figures are also depicted in Assyrian contest renderings. Both types of these glyptic representations may be included in the second glyptic group mentioned in the Introduction, which represents divinities in contest. First-millennium Assyrian and Babylonian contest scenes may be divided into four main groups on the basis of their compositions and the number of participants displayed. The first group depicts a combat between a hero and two foes, arranged in a symmetrical composition. The second group represents a male figure combatting a foe, with a victim between them in an asymmetric layout. The third group consists of seals depicting a combat between a hero and one foe, with no victim. The fourth group depicts an attack on a single foe by two heroes flanking him, popular in scenes depicting the subjugation of Humbaba or the Bull of Heaven by Gilgamesh and Enkidu.[318] The human-shaped figures represented in Assyrian glyptic scenes usually lack "canonized" signifiers, such as a horned mitre, or recognized attributes that could identify them with specific major deities (e.g., figs. 137, 138). Notwithstanding this, the very depiction of a non-realistic confrontation between a human-

318 Ornan 2003.

shaped figure and a beast, let alone a fantastic animal, may support our interpretation of the human-form protagonists rendered on these seals as possessing divine traits. Details such as feather crowns or garments adorned with semi-circles, typical of prominent divinities, or non-realistic features such as wings, often added to these figures, may support their divine nature.[319] Nevertheless, it is usually hard to determine whether the human-form combatants represent specific deities or merely stand for a very general metaphor conveying supernatural power, since our ability to differentiate between these two categories is as yet limited. Moreover, as postulated with regard to first-millennium Babylonian combat scenes, it may be argued that the divine traits of such combatants were mainly intended to exalt their status.

In a few instances of combat scenes, however, an identification of a specific major deity may be offered. As suggested by Moortgat-Correns, the main protagonist fighting a lion-dragon on some Assyrian cylinder seals is to be identified with Ninurta chasing the Anzu bird. This identification is based on a comparison between these glyptic renderings and the monumental display of Ninurta and the lion-dragon depicted on the wall relief from the god's temple at Nimrud, discussed above (fig. 105). This postulation is reconfirmed by visual details referred to in the texts regarding Ninurta's fights, such as the wide span of his step.[320] The common representation of Ninurta in these glyptic renderings show him in an asymmetrical combat composition, running at a great pace above a lion-dragon, while shooting an arrow at his foe—another larger lion-dragon with its head turned back. The different tails of the two hybrids depicted on some of these seals (e.g., fig. 139) may signify two separate monsters, alluded to in the references regarding the god's fights. Thus, the already defeated monster with a scorpion's tail, on which Ninurta was riding, may have alluded to *abūbu*, while the monster with the bird's tail may refer to

319 Cf. Herbordt 1992, pl. 7:1–3. In a somewhat circular manner, the conclusion may be supported by the exceptional portrayal of the Assyrian king as a mortal hero in the Assyrian royal seal impressions, which contrasts with all other combat representations.

320 Moortgat-Correns 1988; Collon 2001, 148; Annus 2002, 105–106.

the deity's current enemy, Anzu or Asag.[321] The portrayal of Ninurta in these compositions differs from those of the above-mentioned gods, as they are not part of a static devotional scene, but rather depict the god as an active protagonist engaged in a fight typified by motion and tension. However, the god is also depicted in a static posture, mounted on his *abūbu* in front of a worshipper (fig. 140).[322]

Another possible version of Ninurta engaged in combat scenes in Assyrian glyptics depicts a fight with a fantastic snake. Representations of this theme may appear on two different types of seals.[323] On seals of the first type, the figure carries a bow and the snake has an erect front with a looped serpentine body (fig. 141). Such seals are usually made of cheap materials, such as sintered quartz or soft stone, possibly explaining their extensive distribution throughout the ancient Near East and beyond. Based upon an example from Hasanlu, this seal type emerged in the ninth century and continued to the mid-seventh century.[324] In the second type of seals, usually made of serpentine, the male protagonist is represented by a figure running over a stretched-out horned snake;[325] the figure grasps a lightning bolt

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321 Seidl 1998b; Black 1987, 23–25.

322 According to Moortgat-Correns (1988, n. 3 and Annus 2002, 44) another plausible representation of Ninurta in a static posture is found in impression C impressed on the Vassal Treaties of Esarhaddon (Chapter 4, § 4.1, fig. 25).

323 Annus 2002, 140.

324 This type of seal was distributed throughout Assyria's main cities as well as in sites within the borders of the Empire, and beyond them: Nush-i Jan, Hasanlu, Tepe Jan, Karmir Blur, Tell Halaf, Tall Knedig, probably Aleppo, Al-Mina, Tarsus, reaching as far as Sardinia. Few were discovered in Babylonia (Ur and Nippur). See Reich and Brandl 1985 (with bibliography). Herbordt 1992, 86–87; Marcus 1996, 117, 122, nos. 61, 71; Curtis 1984, 25, fig. 4:236; Collon 1987, no. 353; Martin 1995, 49, fig. 4c.

325 Collon 2001, 1488, nos. 285–286.The two types of snakes may relate to two Sumerian terms for a horned snake, which was perceived as a huge hybrid, sometimes with human front legs, big eyes, ears, a nose, and a tail. These terms were textually attested during Gudea's time, possibly referring to two separate creatures, which were later merged into a single being named *bašmu*. At times, *bašmu* replaced the *mušḫuššu*, and was also defeated by Tishpak. It was, however, also associated with other deities, e.g. it was said to have been subjugated by Ninurta as early as the Ur III period, and was later enumerated

or a sword (figs. 142, 143). A scene of combat between a god and a snake appears on the above-noted stela bearing an inscription of Tukulti-Ninurta II from Terqa (Tell Ashara; fig. 89), in which the deity, wearing a horned mitre, holds a snake in his left hand, while wielding an axe in his right.[326] The axe and the lightning bolt carried by the god on the stela and the seals are both attributes held by storm gods (e.g., figs. 25, 117), typical, as noted above, of monuments from west of the Euphrates. However, as shown by Moortgat-Correnes, the images of Adad and Ninurta were at times closely related in Assyrian art and thus the figure depicted on the second type of seals could equally have alluded to Ninurta (for Ninurta holding an axe, see fig. 140).[327]

Fights with snakes or the subjugation of a reptile by the storm god are known in Syrian art of the first half of the second millennium and have been interpreted as alluding to the mythic clash between Baal, the storm god, and his enemy Mot (death), represented by the snake.[328] Modified, these representations continued on Mittanian seals of the later half of the second millennium, implying that it may have been Mittanian imagery that provided inspiration for Assyrian seals displaying conflict with a snake.[329]

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among the monstrous creatures that fought alongside Tiamat against Marduk, see Green 1984, 83. Wiggermann 1992, 166–167. Lewis 1996, 29, 33, 37. The apotropaic role of *bašmu* is conveyed through its representations in clay amulet-figurines, and by an unusual relief from the South-West Palace of Esarhaddon at Nimrud, where it is shown standing on its hind legs (Reade 1979, pl. 6). The horned snake does not appear as a sole element on a seal or as a focus of worship in glyptic art.

326 Masetti-Rouault 2001, 91–97.

327 Moortgat-Correns 1988; Annus 2002, 4, 177.

328 Williams-Forte 1983. For a running god on a cylinder seal from Ugarit, see Amiet 1992, 74, no. 167.

329 It should be noted that older Mesopotamian textual evidence also referred to fights between gods and snakes (e.g., Tishpak, chief god of Eshnunna, is said to be standing in a walking pose with both feet on a *bašmu*; Porada 1992, 231 with bibliography). Nevertheless, in contrast to other hybrids, such as the lion-dragon or the *mušḫuššu*, *bašmu* was never shown as a mount—perhaps due to its long horizontal body.

A comparison of divine representations in ninth–eighth-century Assyrian glyptics with those rendered in monumental Assyrian art emphasizes that while monumental imagery demonstrated an innovative inclination to refrain from portraying anthropomorphic major deities, miniature art adhered to the age-old Mesopotamian tradition of depicting deities in human form. This difference accentuates the possibility that while glyptic art was more conservative and was bound to old conventional imagery, the newly articulated first-millennium monumental iconography more easily enabled new themes, less connected to previous traditions. One may, however, observe a tendency of reducing the number of deities represented on cylinder seals during the seventh century, leaving mainly one unidentified image, that of an enthroned goddess, with no specific attributes.[330] Thus, toward the end of the Assyrian Empire, monumental and small-scale representations became closer in their approach to divine representations: both artistic genres rejected, albeit in varying degrees, anthropomorphic renderings of prominent gods and goddesses.

330 Herbordt 1992, pl. 2:1–10 (examples dated to the seventh century); cf. Porada 1948, 86–88, nos. 706–718, 775–777.

CHAPTER FIVE

OUTSIDE THE TEMPLE NON-ANTHROPOMORPHIC REPRESENTATIONS OF DEITIES IN FIRST-MILLENNIUM BABYLONIA

5.1. Non-Anthropomorphic Deities in First-Millennium Babylonian Monuments

The prominent role of divine symbols in first-millennium Babylonian cult—similar to that of human-shaped images of deities—is well illustrated by the above-noted Assyrian wall relief of Tiglath-pileser III (fig. 120) which depicts the removal of both an anthropomorphic statue and an eagle-like image, perhaps representing Ninurta, as war booty by Assyrian soldiers during the Babylonian campaign in 731.[331] The high status of divine, non-anthropomorphic emblems, comparable to that of human-shaped images, is further attested by first-millennium texts recording the mouth-washing and -opening ceremonies (*mīs pî* and *pīt pî*). These ceremonies were also carried out for the induction of new divine symbols, e.g., the moon crescent.[332] Such references may indeed imply that divine emblems at times replaced the images of the human-shaped deities not only in pictorial renderings, but also in actual worship.

Symbol worship is considered a Babylonian characteristic because, as shown below, it was the most common theme depicted on Babylonian cylinder and stamp seals. Other Babylonian artifacts, either depicting a worshipper with divine emblems or else divine emblems only, support the conclusion that anthropomorphic representations of deities are absent from Neo-Babylonian art. This trend is clearly manifested on first-millennium Babylonian *kudurru*s, which continue visual traditions manifested on second-millennium *kudurru*s and display the divine by symbolic renderings (with only a few exceptions, such as the above-mentioned *kudurru* of Nabu-šuma-iškun, fig. 62). The divine emblems on first-millennium *kudurru*s, however, are shown mainly in one register at the upper part of the

331 Barnett and Falkner 1962, xvi, 17, pl. VII.

332 Walker and Dick 1999, 71.

monument, usually arranged in a row. They are not scattered, within registers or without them, on the entire face of the monument, as is typical of the second-millennium examples. Another modification apparent on first-millennium *kudurru*s is the addition of two mortals facing one another: the king facing a lesser-ranking figure, probably a subordinate official, below the row of divine symbols (e.g., on the monument of Marduk-apla-iddina II, dated to 715, fig. 144).[333] The addition of the ruler's image in *kudurru*s was already foreshadowed on a few monuments from the late second millennium, such as the two *kudurru*s of Marduk-nādin-aḫḫe I, which were elaborated with the presumably royal figure (e.g., fig. 8; cf. fig. 5).[334]

The juxtaposition of divine emblems and the royal figure is also demonstrated on stelae dated to Nabonidus, the last Babylonian king, from Babylon and Harran, in which the ruler gestures before celestial symbols (fig. 145).[335] The three celestial symbols of two stars within discs and a crescent moon, representing Ishtar, Shamash(?) and Sin, depicted on the stelae of Nabonidus, usually replace the earlier, commonly invoked Late Babylonian triad of Marduk, Nabu and Nergal.[336] It is not always clear whether the king was depicted alone on the stela of Nabonidus, complemented by an "emptiness" similar to that evident on Babylonian cylinder seals, or whether he faced an additional figure, like those depicted on first-millennium Babylonian *kudurru*s. In any case, it may be postulated that the portrayal of the ruler with divine emblems on these monuments reveals some Assyrian

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333 Seidl 1989, 55–63, 198–199.

334 Seidl 1989, 46–49, 198, nos. 76, 79.

335 Börker-Klähn 1982, nos. 263–266. For a similar stela from Uruk, see Becker 1993, pls. 48–49. The theme is also depicted on a rock relief located near the village of Selaʿ (in the vicinity of Petra) in Jordan, where, however a winged disc replaces the traditional Babylonian solar emblem of a star within a disc: Dalley and Goguel 1997; also Raz and Uchitel 2001, 35. Compare the adoration of symbols on fifth-century stelae from Taima in North-West Arabia, probably inspired by the imagery of Nabonidus (Börker-Klähn 1982, no. 265; Bawden *et al.* 1980, 83–84, pl. 69). A related, yet thematically different, Late Babylonian royal portrayal is shown on a stela of Nebuchadnezzar II from Babylon, on which the king stands in front of a stepped ziggurat and a plan of its temple (Shanks 2002, 33).

336 Ehrenberg 1999, 6.

inspiration, as this was the main theme of Assyrian stelae. Some corroboration of probable Assyrian influence on Late Babylonian monuments can be found in two rock reliefs attributed to Nebuchadnezzar II, discovered at Wadi Brisa in Syria, where the king is shown before a tree and combating a lion—two typical Assyrian conventions for portraying the king.[337] The implied Assyrian imagery conveyed in these two rock reliefs, which were located far from Babylonia, is also reflected by the use of the rosette-type tree in late eighth-century cylinder seals attributed to Babylonian workmanship, first noticed in thirteenth-century Middle Assyrian glyptics, from which it reached late second-millennium Babylonian imagery (e.g., fig. 146).[338] This Babylonian emulation of Assyrian features fits the introduction into Babylonian glyptics of the cactus-like bush, representing a date-palm shoot, and topped by a winged disc (fig. 147).

The prominent role of divine symbols displayed on Babylonian monuments brings to mind the sun emblem shown on the Sippar Tablet of Nabu-apla-iddina II, discussed above (Chapter 3, § 3.1; fig. 65). The nature of the composition rendered on this artifact and its emphasis on the sun emblem mirror the historical narrative reported in its text, i.e., the reinstallation of the divine statue by Nabu-apla-iddina II. In other words, the scene demonstrates a rare historical awareness in Babylonian art, when realistic visual historicity was otherwise evident only in contemporary Assyrian monumental imagery. The unparalleled large scale of the sun disc and its central position—flanked by the enthroned god on the one side and by the three small figures of the priest, the king and the interceding goddess on the other side—reinforces the dominant role of the emblem within the scene. The centrality of the sun symbol on the Sippar Tablet is not unlike that of the symbolic group, consisting of a stylized tree and a winged disc, depicted in the contemporary throne room of Ashurnasirpal II at Nimrud, and stresses the major function of emblem worship in both Assyria and Babylonia. The emphasis on the symbol in the Sippar Tablet is associated with the dominant role played by the divine emblems, depicted above the king and his official on the above-noted

337 Börker-Klähn 1982, nos. 259, 260; Ehrenberg 1999, 7.

338 Wittmann 1992, 183–184, 188–89, no. 20; Collon 2001, 84–85, nos. 179–181.

first-millennium *kudurru*s. It also corresponds to the role of divine symbols on Late Babylonian cylinder and stamp seals, where they appear as the only cult objects. In and of itself, the huge size of the sun disc, along with its central position, does not suggest a clear inclination for symbolic representation. Nevertheless, considering the supremacy of emblems on Babylonian *kudurru*s and the proliferation of symbols on later Late Babylonian seals, it seems warranted, despite the depiction of the god in human shape, to perceive the artifact as reflecting the emblematic nature of Babylonian iconography. The unprecedented representation of the sun disc on the Sippar Tablet is to be regarded, therefore, as a harbinger of the ascending role of divine emblems in first-millennium Babylonian art. The sun emblem depicted on the Sippar Tablet may have been depicted as being raised by the ropes held by the two half-figured divinities and removed from the sanctuary, as is implied by the text.[339] Whether or not one accepts this interpretation, the pertinent point is that it is shown outside the shrine. This specific location of the symbol may have had broader implications, possibly reflecting a cultic reality in which divine statues were kept inside the shrines, while their surrogate symbols were used outside the sacred edifices.[340] Similar cultic reality, although earlier, is implied in Hittite cultic inventories, which mention an anthropomorphic image of a certain deity, housed in its temple within the city, and concurrently its representation by a *ḫuwaši* standing stone, located outside the city.[341] As shown by Mettinger, the phenomenon is recorded on other ancient Near Eastern examples as well: in Middle Bronze Age Israel and in Syrian cities such as Qatna, Aleppo and Ugarit, where worship took place both in temples, housing divine statues, and in open-air sanctuaries, accommodating stelae that represent the deity. Worship of both anthropomorphic and non-anthropomorphic cult objects, as cult toward an empty space, stones,

339 Reiner 1996.

340 Ornan 2004a.

341 Van Loon 1985, 29; Fleming 2000, 84; Seidl 2000, 109. The custom of displaying a non-anthropomorphic object outside the temple is also implied by the ark in biblical accounts, which occasionally, as in military campaigns, was taken out of the holy of holies to represent God (Na'aman 1999, 393, 411; 2002, 45).

pillars, or trees, is attested in the Phoenician-Punic realm and archaic classical Greece.[342] The possibility that the "symbol of Ashur" (*kakki Aššur*) alludes to a weapon of the god carried by the Assyrian troops in foreign territories or established as cult objects in conquered cities[343] sustains the notion that when removed from its sacred abode the divine image was modified into a non-anthropomorphic object.

The deity in its anthropomorphic form is also absent from the colored moulded brick decoration of Nebuchadnezzar II's building in Babylon. The reconstructed façade of the throne hall in Nebuchadnezzar's Southern Palace is decorated with stylized volutes standing for date palms, surrounded by "frames" constructed by additional repeated volutes and palmettes. These floral features are to be compared with the repeated date-palm components most common in Assyrian palatial decoration, and they probably also allude to the characteristics of abundance attached to the king,[344] although his image was not shown in the Babylonian palace. In the lower part of the façade there is a row of marching lions with upright tails. The entire decoration of the façade terminates in two rows of rosettes at the upper and the lower edges (fig. 148). Godly figures are also absent from the Processional Way, leading from the North Palace to the sacred enclosure of Marduk, which was adorned with a row of marching lions with downward-pointing tails. The lions symbolized the goddess Ishtar, after whom the adjacent gate is named, because of its proximity to her ancient temple.

The northern section of the Processional Way ended in a double gate called *Ištar-sakipat-tebiša* ("Ishtar who decimates her enemies"), adorned with animals and hybrids: rows of bulls, representing Adad, interchanged with rows of *mušḫuššu*, the fantastic animal sacred to Marduk (fig. 149). Both the *mušḫuššu* and the bull also embellished the earlier building phase of the Ishtar Gate, built of unglazed bricks. In Late Babylonian glyptics, *mušḫuššu* usually appears as a mount for the emblems of Marduk and Nabu. His representation here, however, differs in that it is an independent emblem with a clear apotropaic function. The role of *mušḫuššu* as a protective creature was already

342 Mettinger 1995, 28–32, 79–113, 115–134, 112, with bibliography.

343 Holloway 2001, 241–249, 264–265.

344 Winter 2003.

attested on a late third-millennium stone vessel from Tello dedicated to Gudea of Lagash, on which two erect *mušḫuššu*s flank twisted snakes within a portal (fig. 150). As an apotropaic being it appeared on Old Babylonian terracottas, was articulated in the form of clay figurines in the first millennium and was shown in a rare depiction on an Assyrian relief from Ashurbanipal's palace at Nineveh (fig. 151). Similarly poised on its rear legs, a double figure of *mušḫuššu* flanked Marduk's *marru* emblem on a Neo-Elamite seal (fig. 152). To these renderings one can associate the bronze head of a *mušḫuššu* which may have been carried on a high standard, or may have guarded a gate, as mentioned in the inscriptions of Nebuchadnezzar and Nergal-šar-uṣur.[345]

The Ishtar Gate and Processional Way complex formed a part of the sacred structures of Babylon, where the procession of divine statues—headed by Marduk—passed during the *akītu* New Year Festival.[346] The absence of divine anthropomorphic portrayals from Babylonian royal and sacred buildings here corresponds to their absence on *kudurru*s, stelae and Late Babylonian seals, and supports the conclusion that Babylonian art preferred to represent the divine by a symbol rather than by its human shape.

Despite the fact that the anthropomorphic deity was omitted from Babylonian public structures, written sources report that the people of Babylon had a chance to view their anthropomorphic deities in all their glory. On the first day of the month of *nisannu*, the Babylonian New Year Festival, the statue of Marduk, the supreme Babylonian god, was brought out of his sanctuary, accompanied by the statues of the other deities, and was carried in a long procession to a temple outside the city.[347]

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345 Lambert 1984, 87–88, 92–93; van Buren 1930, 187–188, nos. 941–942, pl. 50: figs. 239–240; Suter 2000, 65–66; Oates 1991, 170; Green 1985, 77, pl. 14b; Parrot 1961, 181, pl. 230.

346 Marzahn 1992, 7, 17–22, figs. 12, 32–33.

347 Cohen 1993, 437–440 and 406, 416, 418, 426–427 (for other *akītu* processions displaying divine statues).

5.2. Non-Anthropomorphic Deities in First-Millennium Babylonian Glyptics

Most of the Late Babylonian non-anthropomorphic renderings of deities appear on glyptic finds as part of a devotional theme, depicting a worshipper before divine symbols. The theme was especially common on conoid or pyramidal stamp seals, carved in the late drilled style, but may also be found on cylinder seals, usually articulated in modelled style (e.g., figs. 153, 154, 157–160, 163, 164, 166–169). These seals were carved from semi-precious hard stone, often quartz: bluish, white, or gray chalcedony, agate, or carnelian. Stamp seals became common in Mesopotamian glyptics with the late-eighth-century proliferation of the Aramaic script written on papyri, which were suited for sealing by stamps, rather than cylinder seals.

The use of stamp seals reached its peak in Babylonia during the sixth–fifth centuries, when they became more popular than cylinder seals. Their correspondence in time to the zenith in the popularity of the worship of divine symbol explains the frequency of the symbol-worship motif on this type of seals.[348] In addition to renderings of divine symbols in devotional compositions, divine emblems often appeared as the sole element on Late Babylonian stamp seals, without the figure of the adorant (e.g., figs. 155, 156). Stamp seals with symbol worship became widespread in Babylonia during the reign of Nebuchadnezzar II—and perhaps even during the reign of Nebopolassar, his father, continued through the reign of Nabonidus, the last Babylonian king, and into the Achaemenid period, until the end of the fifth century. Because many seal impressions depicting symbol worship were discovered on contemporary inscribed tablets, this style is considered most representative of Late Babylonian glyptics.

The carved areas of stamp seals—especially pyramidal seals—sometimes extended to their sides, which usually depicted divine symbols. The worshipper, at times a priest, reveals his right side to the viewer—as is typical in Mesopotamian worship—and gestures toward divine emblems, usually placed upon square pedestals. On Babylonian cylinder seals depicting deity worship, two or three emblems were

348 Porada 1948, 95, 98–100; Buchanan and Moorey 1988, 56–57, 66; Collon 2001, 193.

usually shown atop pedestals, set on the seal's baseline and not scattered in the pictorial field. The choice of emblems on the cylinder seals usually included a crescent or a star on a mountain-like rise, the ram-headed sceptre or goat-fish of Ea, a scorpion-man, or a type of fowl.

Because most of the known seals from this period were bought in antiquity markets, their original provenance in Mesopotamia is unknown; thus, provenanced seals are especially important. In Babylon, seals were discovered in various areas and contexts: many were revealed in the *Perlendepot*, which included seals from several periods that were apparently collected and interred during the Parthian period. Of a total of 482 seals published by Jakob-Rost, 184 are dated to the first millennium and classified as either Neo-Assyrian or Neo-Babylonian. The number of stamp seals discovered in Babylon exceeds that discovered in Ashur. In addition, as the worshipper-and-symbol motif is depicted mainly on conoid seals especially popular in Babylonia, their number in Babylonia is double that in Assyria.[349] A few stamp seals depicting symbol devotion were revealed in a hoard of jewellery in the Enunmah temple at Ur, below Persian buildings and above the Nebuchadnezzar pavement. Impressions representing devotion of symbols were found on tablets dated from Nabonidus to Xerxes I in the Ebabbar temple at Sippar, where these scenes were common on Babylonian seal types, and typify cylinder seals belonging to the *šangû* temple personnel. This theme also comprises more than half of the sealed tablets of the temple archive at Uruk, dating from the reign of Nabopolassar to the early years of Darius (521–48).[350] Herbordt cites documents from Nineveh, Ashur and Nimrud that bear Assyrian seal impressions from the reign of Sargon II to the post-canonical period, which display more symbol worship than the worship of anthropomorphic deities.[351]

The first scholar to examine and classify these seals as Babylonian and as bearing distinctive features was Joachim Menant in the 1880s.

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349 Jakob-Rost 1997, 44–47.

350 Woolley 1962, 29, pl. 30: U. 487, U. 488; Buchanan and Moorey 1988, 57; Ehrenberg 1999, 15–25, 43, nos. 20–153; 2001, 185, 188–190; MacGinnis 1995, 170–173.

351 Herbordt 1992, 110.

Menant dated inscribed tablets ranging from the reign of Nebuchadnezzar to the Persian period that bore impressions from such seals, and was the first to stress the link between symbol worship of Babylonian glyptics of the seventh–fifth centuries and the appearance of divine symbols on Kassite *kudurrus* and seals.[352] Devotional themes, in which divine symbols replace anthropomorphic deities, continued, as mentioned above, in Babylonia after its conquest by Cyrus. This is verified by cylinder-seal impressions on tablets discovered in Babylon, including those dated to the year 433/2 of Artaxerxes I.[353] Other seal impressions were found on documents from the archives of the Murashu family in Nippur. Their latest dating is 404/405, indicating that this motif was in use until the end of the fifth century. Nevertheless, it has been demonstrated that representations of worshipper and symbols were less frequent during the fifth century, and were gradually replaced by motifs reflecting Iranian and Achaemenid influences.[354] The absence of this motif from bullae dating from 375–335, discovered in Wadi ed-Daliyeh in the Jordan Valley, north of Jericho, and others from Daskyleion in Phrygia, central Anatolia,[355] indicates that it was no longer in use in the fourth century. The symbol-worship theme was especially common on stamp seals from the Achaemenid period, while cylinder seals, which were revived for a short duration at the end of the sixth century, were adorned with motifs related to the king and his regime. This difference probably stemmed from the seals' varying roles: cylinder seals were used in state administration, while stamp seals served private individuals. This is corroborated by the large number of seal impressions depicting worshipper and symbols, found in the private Murashu archives, as opposed to their low number in the state Treasury House archives of Persepolis.[356] It is difficult to distinguish between stamp seals from the Babylonian period and those from the Persian period, as they do not differ in style, in their selection of

352 Menant 1882, 399–402; 1886, 129–148.

353 Klengel-Brandt 1969, 335–336.

354 Zettler 1979, 260, 266; Bregstein 1996.

355 Leith 1997; Balkan 1959; Kaptan-Bayburtluoğlu 1990.

356 Porada 1948, 101; Schmidt 1957, 47; Collon 1987, 90; Garrison 2000, 142–143, with bibliography.

symbols, or in the details of clothing. The continuity of similar glyptic themes apparent in the Late Babylonian and Achaemenid periods highlights the fact that political modifications do not necessarily parallel cultural ones. Mesopotamian divine emblems adopted by Achaemenid glyptics as part of the great Mesopotamian influence on Achaemenid imagery, especially in its early stages, stress the cultural continuity prevailing between the Late Babylonian and early Achaemenid periods.[357]

Symbolic representations of deities were known in first-millennium Babylonian glyptics even before their proliferation during the Late Babylonian period, as attested by ninth–eighth-century Neo-Babylonian modelled-style cylinder seals. However, although few symbols appear as the focus of the seal's composition, they usually have only a secondary role and generally accompany combat representations. The pedestals of the divine emblems on these seals are lower and more schematic than the ones depicted on later seals.[358] In comparison with contemporary Assyrian seals, which are packed with details, the Late Babylonian seals were virtually "bare", displaying only a worshipper and symbols. Occasional additional elements are astral symbols, displayed in the upper part of the seal's scene. The number of symbols adored by the worshipper is usually two or four, mounted on square pedestals in front of him.

The typical worship gesture of Late Babylonian seals, called *appa labānu* ("nose rubbing"), depicts the devotee raising his right forearm, with its palm open in front of his face. A devotional gesture in which one forearm is raised is also depicted on Kassite seals and on a *kudurru* of Marduk-nādin-aḫḫe, a fact that helps trace the origins of this gesture to Babylonia. Some seals display the worshipper gesturing with both arms, but, as has already been suggested, there is no essential difference between the two gestures.[359] A one-armed gesture in which the clenched right fist holds a date-palm shoot close to the face, signifying pleading, supplication, worship and adoration, is

357 Ehrenberg 1999, 41–42. For the continuity of the cult of Nabu and Marduk in Achaemenid and Hellenistic times, see Annus 2002, 49.

358 Cf. Wittmann 1992, nos. 14–20, 29–35; and cf. Ehrenberg 1999, 25–27, nos. 155–188.

359 Porada 1948, 95; Gruber 1975, 78 (with bibliography).

found on first-millennium Babylonian and Assyrian monuments. As a date shoot has not been textually recorded in connection with the three versions of the *appa labānu*—holding the hand close to the nose, touching the nose and rubbing the nose—it is conceivable that the absence of the palm-shoot from Late Babylonian seals does not preclude it from being included among the *appa labānu* gestures.[360] Many of the worshippers on these seals are dressed in the typical Babylonian fashion also shown on monuments. They wear a long dress that sometimes covers their feet, adorned with a wide belt and fringed horizontal hem. The back edge of the clothing has pleats, rendered as vertical lines along the skirt line. The body of the Babylonian worshipper was heavy, as opposed to that of the Assyrian man, who was depicted as muscular and powerful.

5.2.1. Selected Divine Symbols in Babylonian Glyptics

Predominant emblems on Babylonian stamp seals are the triangular-headed spade (*marru*) of Marduk and the wedge of Nabu—usually displayed together on a pedestal or on the *mušḫuššu* hybrid. The dog, Gula's sacred animal, the lamp, Nusku's symbol, and the crescent as a celestial body shown in the upper part of a seal's scene were common on Babylonian cylinder seals, as well as the scorpion-bird-man, the ram-headed sceptre and the goat-fish representing Ea. These symbols were depicted as main cult objects, thus signified by the gesturing devotee shown in front of them, or as sole elements on both cylinder and stamp seals. The moon crescent followed by the star were the most common emblems depicted on these seals as secondary elements appearing on the upper part of the seal's pictorial composition. In certain cases, such as sealings found in the archive of the temple of Eanna at Uruk, another common divine symbol was rendered: a star-topped lion-headed emblem (fig. 156). This newly designed emblem, inspired by the Old Babylonian imagery of warrior deities, such as Nergal carrying a double-headed mace, was typical of the reign of

360 Magen 1986, 62. For the one-arm worship gesture on Kassite seals, see Porada 1948, 64, nos. 573–574. According to Gruber (1975, 78–79), the addition of the date-palm shoot does not change the identification of the *appa labānu* gesture.

Nebuchadnezzar, probably selected to fit the specific requirements of the shrine of Ishtar, patron goddess of the Uruk shrine.[361]

5.2.2.1. Spade, Stylus and mušḫuššu

The spade and the stylus, emblems of Marduk and Nabu, appeared on Babylonian seals mainly from the end of the seventh century, reflecting the religious precept—which apparently reached its height during the reign of Nabopolassar—that Marduk was the principal deity of Babylonia, the head of its pantheon, regarded as king of the gods (e.g. figs. 153, 157).[362] As opposed to the *marru*'s prevalence on *kudurru*s, it was much less frequent on late second- to early first-millennium Neo-Babylonian cylinder seals. When rendered on the latter, however, it was illustrated in varied compositions: next to a tree and a sphinx on an eleventh–tenth-century seal from Babylon; in a devotional scene alongside a deity(?) on a contemporaneous seal; and as an object of worship among other emblems on a ninth–seventh-century cylinder seals.[363] The *marru* and the stylus as main objects of worship and secondary motifs appeared on Aramaic inscribed stamp seals, which continued in Achaemenid glyptics.[364] As has been noted above, the emblems of Marduk and Nabu occasionally appeared above a shoot-like bush, in emulation of the Assyrian motif of a winged disc above a tree.[365]

Similar to the widespread depictions of the emblems of Marduk and Nabu in Late Babylonian glyptics are the renderings of their mount hybrid: *mušḫuššu*, shown reclining at the feet of Marduk on a twelfth-century *kudurru* and on the huge ninth-century cylinder from Babylon (figs. 12, 66). The associations between this hybrid and Marduk, represented by the spade, are reconfirmed on a Babylonian bronze found in the Heraion at Samos, portraying a reclining *mušḫuššu* next to a *marru*.[366] Nevertheless, despite the proliferation of depictions of *mušḫuššu* in seventh–sixth-century Babylonian glyptic

361 Ehrenberg 1999, 14, 41, nos. 1–19.

362 Cf. Ehrenberg 1999, 19–20, no. 63.

363 Wittmann 1992, nos. 15,18, 43, 57, 217.

364 Ornan 1993, nos. 36–40, 42–46.

365 Cf. Porada 1948, no. 808; Collon 2001, 12; Ornan, forthcoming (b).

366 Jantzen 1972, 71, pl. 72 9 (no. B1124); Curtis 1994a, 8, fig. 20.

imagery—particularly on stamp seals—and its prominent role on the Ishtar Gate, *mušḫuššu* does not seem to be rendered as an independent object of worship.

5.2.1.2. The Dog

As the dog, symbol of Gula, is rare on Babylonian cylinder seals from the end of the second millennium to the seventh century, its representations as an object of worship in front of a worshipper (fig. 158) or as an independent emblem on Late Babylonian seals are to be perceived as a revival of a Middle Babylonian iconographic tradition (noted above, Chapter 2, § 2.2).[367]

5.2.1.3. The Lamp

The lamp, emblem of Nusku, a god associated with fire and light, was common on pyramidal and conoid stamp seals, displayed on its own or with other emblems being adored by a worshipper. The emblem was used in glyptic art before the end of the eighth century, and was especially characteristic of sixth- to fifth-century Late Babylonian stamp seals.[368] As a divine emblem the lamp made its first appearance—without a pedestal—on fourteenth-century *kudurrus*. Two *kudurrus* dated to Meli-Shipak in the first quarter of the twelfth century display the emblem alongside legends that identify it as Nusku's symbol. It was only during the reign of Nabu-apla-iddina II, in the first third of the ninth century, that the emblem began to be placed atop a tall tripod.[369] Originally having had a somewhat

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367 Wittmann 1992; Collon 1994; Ehrenberg 1999, 22, nos. 82–84; Porada 1948, no. 781, 795; Buchanan and Moorey 1988, no. 382. As an independent emblem the dog is also missing from first-millennium Assyrian glyptics, despite the fact that it is shown as an attribute, alongside anthropomorphic Gula, cf. fig. 124 (Ornan 2004b).

368 Black and Green 1992, 145. For a few post-eighth-century cylinder seals depicting the lamp, see Porada 1948, no. 755; Legrain 1925, no. 961. For the lamp on Babylonian stamp seals, Delaporte 1910, nos. 566, 568, 570; 1920, pl. 92: 6,9,33; 1923, pl. 54: 22,24,25 (Susa). Porada 1948, nos. 795, 796; Buchanan and Moorey 1988, no. 384; MacGinnis 1995, pl. 38, no. 151; Jakob-Rost 1997, nos. 241, 256.

369 Streck 1998; Seidl 1989, 130.

secondary status as the vizier of Enlil, Nusku acquired an important role during the Neo-Assyrian period, when he was worshipped together with Sin of Harran, who was regarded as his father.[370] Despite this, the lamp rarely appeared on Assyrian and Babylonian cylinder seals. Considering the first-millennium family ties between Nusku and Sin, the common representations of the lamp on seventh–sixth-century stamp seals may be associated with the rise of the moon-god worship. In that case, the renderings of the lamp would probably allude to the aspects of light and the triumph of light over darkness, also conveyed in the above-mentioned representations of human-shaped Sin standing in the crescent moon. Nusku's cult, together with that of Nabu and Marduk, is especially evident among Aramaean speakers in regions west of the Euphrates (fig. 159). Indeed, private names incorporating Sin and Nusku as theophoric components, which were popular during this period, match the emblem's popularity in stamp seals and support the increased prominence of both Sin and Nusku in this period, also indicated by the restitution of Nusku's temple in Harran by Esarhaddon and Ashurbanipal.[371]

The representation of the lamp on Late Babylonian seals differs from the depiction of other divine emblems, as it is placed on a high candelabrum and not, as is common, on a rectangular pedestal. This positioning of the lamp probably reflects an everyday use aimed at obtaining better lighting from actual oil lamps. The small drillings shown along the candelabra depicted on the seals probably stand for the metal links typical of actual bronze candelabra. The impact of real objects on the articulation of the lamp as a divine symbol is further attested by the legs of the objects depicted in the glyptic finds, which resemble actual tripod ox-hoofed candelabra.[372] At times the glyptic representations of the lamp as a divine emblem are replaced by renderings of roosters, which also alluded to Nusku (fig. 160).[373]

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370 Black and Green 1992, 145; Ehrenberg 2002b, 57.

371 Holloway 1995, 289, 200; DDD 609.

372 See Merhav 1991, 267–263. Lamps on tripod candelabra were also depicted on Lamashtu plaques, where they probably represented a cultic object rather than a divine symbol (Seidl 1989, 130; Farber 1987, 93).

373 Ehrenberg 2002.

5.1.2.4. Scorpion Hybrids

The scorpion-bird-man is a winged human-headed creature with a horned mitre, a body and tail of a scorpion and two lion's legs. It commonly appears in Late Babylonian glyptic art on its own, facing another hybrid or an emblem, or in a composition of two identical creatures, back to back or facing each other with an offering table between them.[374] At times it appears as an object of worship, in front of which stands an adorant (fig. 163).[375] These renderings of the scorpion-bird-man occur on Babylonian stamp and cylinder seals from the seventh century onward, continuing onto Achaemenid seals, where the hybrid wears the serrated royal headgear. The scorpion-bird-man made its advent on *kudurru*s from the thirteenth and the beginning of the twelfth centuries.[376] The hybrid does not correspond to any known supernatural entity referred to in Mesopotamian texts. Its identification and character are further complicated by its few portrayals in combat scenes, both as a hero and as a foe, exemplified by an impression of a Babylonized cylinder seal from Nimrud, dated to Sin-šar-iškun (fig. 161).

A variant of this creature, also known in Babylonian imagery, has a wingless human upper body, a mitre-less head and bird-like legs. This composite being first appears on a *kudurru* of Nebuchadnezzar I, where it is shown holding a bow and shooting an arrow. These two scorpion-like creatures were rarely shown in Assyrian contexts, but were rendered on the Maltai rock reliefs (fig. 97b),[377] thus conveying the impact of Babylonian imagery on that of Assyria during the reign of Sennacherib, as a part of this ruler's policy of appropriating Babylonian elements, discussed above (Chapter 4, § 4.1.1).

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374 Delaporte 1923, pl. 90:10, 11; 1920, pl. 52; 15 Porada 1948, no. 801; Moortgat 1940, nos. 709, 752, 766; Collon 2001, no. 195.

375 Cf. Ehrenberg 1999, pl. 10:76.

376 Seidl 1989, 169–170.

377 For the first type of the scorpion-bird-man, see Delaporte 1923, pls. 86:19, 89:14, 16. Seidl (1989, 169–170) has associated this hybrid with Ninlil because it decorates the goddess's throne at Maltai (our fig. 97b). The second type of scorpion-bird-man has been identified by her as the *girtablullu*—an independent creature which does not appear as a divine attribute (Seidl 1989, 170–171). Cf. Frankfort 1939, 157; Porada 1948, no. 749 (our fig. 162).

Animal-like scorpion-bird-men with birds' talons and horned, feathered mitres are represented in the pre-Kapara Tell Halaf reliefs. Two similar hybrids, with a relief body and a sculpture-in-the-round head, were positioned in the entranceway to the palace complex (fig. 165). Another creature was shown among the so-called "small" Tell Halaf reliefs, which embellished the back wall of the palace, along which ran the passageway from the city gate to the scorpion-men gate. The scorpion-men gate and the "small" Tell Halaf reliefs have been dated, according to conventional chronology, to the very late tenth century and the beginning of the ninth, and are the only known monuments to depict scorpion hybrids as entryway guards. These Syrian monumental portrayals of animal-shaped scorpion hybrids hint at indirect Babylonian influence on the Tell Halaf sculptors at the turn of the millennium, and suggest that their prototypes not only included Syrian ivories, as has been conjectured by Winter, but may have encompassed other artifacts, such as second-millennium *kudurrus*.[378]

It was probably the scorpion's stinger, which at times could be lethal, that underlay the apotropaic role of all scorpion creatures, and it was therefore prominently displayed. Its importance is reflected in the emphasized tails of all variants of scorpion hybrids, as well as in the fact that other creatures were sometimes endowed with it, e.g. the *abūbu*, on which Ninurta was riding (figs. 78, 129, 140).[379]

Another scorpion being, which should be considered in connection with the two animal-like scorpion-bird-men despite its rarity in Babylonian imagery, is an erect, human-like scorpion hybrid type known in Assyrian iconography, particularly in glyptic art. This creature, shown standing on two bird's legs, identified by Wiggermann as the *girtablullu*, has a scorpion's tail, a human head and torso (e.g. fig. 162) and genitalia occasionally with a snake's head at the tip. A similar third-millennium biped scorpion hybrid appears on the front panel of a lyre from the Royal Cemetery at Ur, as well as

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378 Von Oppenheim 1933, 173, 186–188, pls. 33a, 41–42; Frankfort 1996, 295–296. The dating of the small reliefs and the gate scorpion hybrids from Tell Halaf is supported by the bilingual inscribed statue of Hadad-yiš^{c}i discovered in nearby Tell Fakharyeh, cf. Winter 1989, 324–325, 326–327, 329, 331–332.

379 Black and Green 1992, 160–161; Herbordt 1992, pl. 1:3; Delaporte 1923, pl. 88:5; Porada 1948, no. 712; Collon 2001, 11.

on a contemporary cylinder seal.[380] *Girtablullu* appears in the Babylonian creation myth as one of Tiamat's creatures; in the Gilgamesh Epic it is accompanied by his female consort, both protecting the gate of the twin-peaked Mashu Mountain, where Shamash rose. The association of *girtablullu* with Shamash, attested as early as the third millennium, clarifies the appearance of *girtablullu* on Assyrian seals, as an atlantid supporting a winged disc (e.g., fig. 162).[381] It also sometimes props up other deities, such as the moon god (e.g., fig. 73). An erect biped, winged *girtablullu*-type demon-scorpion was represented in a rare monumental composition on a limestone relief from the Herald Wall at Carchemish, where it is shown as one of two combatants subduing a winged bull.[382]

5.2.1.5. The Goat-Fish, the Ram-headed Sceptre and the Merman Fish Hybrid

The goat-fish, sacred hybrid of Ea identified with the *ṣuḫurmašu*, is particularly common on sixth- to fifth-century Babylonian seals as the sole element on the seal. The forepart of this creature consists of the head, chest and forelegs of a goat; its hindquarters are that of a fish. At times it is represented as the mount of a ram-headed sceptre, another emblem of Ea (fig. 155). It may also appear together with a scorpion-bird-man or as the focus of adoration.[383] The goat-fish appears in the imagery of Ur III, Isin-Larsa and the Old Babylonian periods.[384] It is

380 Green 1985, 75–76. Among Wiggermann's arguments (1995, 79–80) for identifying this hybrid as the *girtablullu* is the *lullu* suffix meaning "man", befitting the erect, human-like stance of this being (cf. Frankfort 1939, 67, pl. 15:j; Amiet 1961, 133–134, pl. 95: 1245D,G).

381 Green 1985; Wiggermann 1992, 180–181, 186, 188 (types c7, d7); Black and Green 1992, 161.

382 Orthmann 1971, pl. 28: d; Porada 1948, no. 611.

383 Keel 1997a, 680, no. 53; Delaporte 1910, no. 564; 1920, pl. 48:30 (Susa); 1923, pl. 90;9; Porada 1948, nos. 782–785, 787, 800; Jakob-Rost 1997, no. 237 (Babylon), 238; Moortgat 1940, nos. 748, 753 (with scorpion-bird-man worship); Yağci 1990, 120, pl. Ib, fig. 1b (worship of a goat-fish); Teissier 1984, no. 230 (adoration of a goat-fish); Ehrenberg 1999, 17, 64 (veneration of a goat-fish no. 75). For worship of the hybrid in the Achaemenid period, see Graziani 1989, nos. 1.22, 3.22, 5.22, 1.43–44, 1.45, 1.52, 2.53.

384 Collon 1986, 43.

associated with Ea in Middle Babylonian texts and is identified (together with the turtle and ram-headed sceptre) as his emblem on *kudurru*s of Meli-Shipak (figs. 16, 44), where it is depicted on the upper part of the monument, thus indicating the god's highest rank in the pantheon. An inscribed Neo-Assyrian clay figurine of a goat-fish reconfirms both the hybrid's identification with Ea and its apotropaic role.[385] In contrast to the common representations of the symbol in Middle Babylonian *kudurru*s, it is absent (like the ram-headed sceptre) from Kassite seals. Two apotropaic goat-fish hybrids, located at an entrance of a shrine, are depicted on a seal impression from the Ashur archive of Tiglath-pileser I, conveying (as suggested in Chapter 2, § 2.5) Babylonian influence (fig. 57). Babylonian inspiration may also be conveyed on a Middle Assyrian alabaster vessel found in tomb 45 at Ashur, engraved with a goat-fish.[386] In a few cases, especially on ninth- to eighth-century Assyrian cylinder seals, the goat-fish appears as the animal mount of anthropomorphic Ea (fig. 121).[387]

The second emblem of Ea common in Late Babylonian glyptics is the ram-headed sceptre, which is sometimes shown mounted on the goat-fish. The symbol is represented in Old Babylonian and Old Assyrian imagery, continuing on Middle Babylonian *kudurru*s. Depictions of the ram-headed sceptre with the goat-fish were not common in the second millennium and only appear on twelfth-century *kudurru*s, continuing into Late Babylonian and Achaemenid glyptics.[388] As an outcome of Babylonian inspiration, the ram-headed sceptre was introduced into first-millennium Assyrian imagery: on one of Sennacherib's Bavian rock reliefs and on Esarhaddon's stela from Zinjirli (figs. 104b, 187).

The identification of most of the above emblems as divine is based on written testimonies. However, in a few cases, such as the portrayals

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385 Seidl 1989, 28, 153–154, 180; Wiggermann 1992, 184; Green 1983, 93; 1986a, 25–26.

386 Haller 1954, 140, pl. 31: c, d (Harper *et al.* 1995, 88).

387 Collon 2001, nos. 125, 293.

388 Seidl 1989, 166; Ehrenberg 1999, 19, 23, nos. 52, 103–104; Klengel-Brandt 1969, 332–333, fig. 1; Porada 1948, no. 803; Legrain 1925, no. 968. For an Old Babylonian depiction of a ram-headed sceptre without a goat-fish, see Frankfort 1939, pl. 27:1.

of the scorpion-bird-man, divine classification is implied only by the devotional composition in which the hybrid appears as a focus of worship (e.g., fig. 163),[389] since otherwise, as indicated, it is usually shown as a mount animal. In other words, a hybrid previously recorded mainly as an attribute became a divine emblem by the specific function in which it is rendered in glyptic imagery. This phenomenon, which manifests a process of symbolization, accords well with the seventh–fifth-century Late Babylonian preference for replacing the image of a human-shaped deity with his or her non-anthropomorphic representation.

Another fantastic creature common on Late Babylonian cylinder and stamp seals rendered as the focus of worship, is the *kulullû*, a merman-like fish hybrid (fig. 164). This hybrid has a human head, arms and torso, combined with the lower body and tail of a fish, and is depicted in Mesopotamian imagery from the Old Babylonian period onward (e.g., fig. 17).[390] Although less frequent in Assyrian glyptics, it was shown in a marine scene on reliefs of Sargon from Khorsabad together with winged bulls, where it probably had an apotropaic role. A rare representation of a *kulullû* on a relief of the "small" Tell Halaf reliefs[391] may support the above-noted suggestion of Babylonian inspiration on the iconographical repertoire of Tell Halaf architectural decoration.

5.2.1.6. The Lion-Dragon

The lion-dragon shown as the mount of various deities serves as another example of a mount hybrid "upgraded" to the role of a divine symbol. Though shown in a unique depiction and with no bird's tail, it appears as an object of cultic veneration on a Babylonized Neo-Elamite cylinder seals (fig. 166).[392] Like the scorpion-bird-man, the goat-fish and the *kulullû*, the lion-dragon has otherwise been portrayed

389 Moortgat 1940, nos. 748, 753; Porada 1948, nos. 783, 784, 800; MacGinnis 1995, nos. 85, 106; Jakob-Rost 1997, nos. 237, 238; Ehrenberg 1999, 21 (no. 76) with n. 77; Seidl 1989, 170.

390 Green 1986a; Black and Green 1992, 131–132. Cf. Porada 1948, nos. 785 and as the sole element on nos. 802, 803; Buchanan and Moorey 1988, no. 369.

391 Von Oppenheim 1933, pl. 35a.

392 De Miroschedji 1982, 58, figs. 2, 3.

on its own, as a secondary element in the glyptic composition, or as a foe in a combat scene (e.g., fig. 139).[393] The hybrid has become known since the Akkadian period as the "roaring storm beast" (*ūmu nāʾiru)* and is shown as the mount of the storm god Ishkur. With the disappearance of the lion-headed eagle, Anzu, the rival of Ninurta, at the end of the third millennium, and with the introduction of Adad, the storm god mounted on a bull in the Old Babylonian period, the lion-dragon became the hybrid that represented Anzu.[394] Its association with Anzu explains its gaping jaws, feathered tail and claw-like hind feet. On a *kudurru* of Meli-Shipak (fig. 44), the lion-dragon serves a mount for the double-headed mace of Ninurta or Nergal. Adad, carrying a lightning bolt and accompanied by the hybrid, is depicted on the large cylinder from Babylon (fig. 67). The representation of the lion-dragon with both Ninurta and Adad probably stems from the resemblance between these two warrior gods, as exemplified on the relief from Ninurta temple at Nimrud (fig. 105). It was sometimes shown as the hybrid mount of Ishtar or of another unidentified divinity (fig. 62). On the Maltai rock reliefs (fig. 97a), the hybrid, albeit with closed jaws, is portrayed as the mount of Sin and of Adad. The related hybrid, depicted as a lion-dragon with a scorpion tail—identified, as noted, with *abūbu*—was also associated with Ninurta (figs. 139, 140).[395]

5.2.1.7. The Fish-apkallu

Related to these representations of fantastic animals rendered as foci of cult are portrayals of the fish-*apkallu*s holding a bucket (*bandudû*), well attested in both monumental and miniature Assyrian art, in which they usually had the role of protective supernatural beings. Like the transformation of the above hybrids from a mount attribute to a divine symbol, these fish-*apkallu*, portrayed on sealings from the Eanna

393 Delaporte 1923, pl. 92:38; Buchanan and Moorey 1988, no. 567.

394 Wiggermann 1992, 153; 1994, 243; cf. Frankfort 1939, pl. 27:i with j.

395 Lion-dragon with Ninurta or Nergal: Seidl 1989, 181–187; Collon 2001, 11, 148 (the scorpion-tailed monster is termed "lion-griffin"). With Ishtar: Porada 1948, no. 691. With Sin and Adad on the Maltai rock relief: Boehmer 1975, 51, 54; also Börker-Klähn 1982, 211, 223 (no. 243).

temple at Uruk (fig. 167),[396] became godly symbols by means of their incorporation in devotional scenes. Comparable modification is attested on a rare example of a non-provenanced Babylonian cylinder seal, depicting a worshipper before a large fish (fig. 168), an iconic depiction conveying fertility and abundance.[397]

5.2.1.8. Crossed Beasts

Another kind of depiction included among the seals conveying symbolization occurs on a non-provenanced Late-Babylonian cylinder seal (fig. 169): a rare rendering of a worshipper gesturing toward a symbolic group, consisting of two crossed beasts. The two-winged fantastic animals—winged ibexes or bulls—stand back to back on their rear legs, their fore-body slanting forward. The depiction of two crossed beasts has been known in Mesopotamia since the third millennium, when it occurs mainly in combat scenes of Early Dynastic glyptic art, continuing into the Akkadian period (fig. 170). Later periods witnessed a decline in such representations, although the motif did appear occasionally on Old Babylonian and Middle Assyrian seals (fig. 171); it then reemerged in the first millennium.[398] The theme of standing crossed animals, usually ibexes, may have been based upon the behaviour of mature male ibexes, which fight with one another, standing on their hind legs and striking their horns together.[399] The motif was depicted either by itself, as exemplified on a stamped brick from Babylon (fig. 172), or as an accompanying feature (fig. 122).[400]

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396 Ehrenberg 1999, 20, nos. 67–72. For the history of the research concerning the identification of the fish-*apkallu*, see Ehrenberg 1998, n. 134.

397 Cf. Moortgat 1940, no. 687; Hrouda 1990, 111–113; Black and Green 1992, 82. In Early Dynastic, Ur III and Old Babylonian iconography, the fish was shown at times within running water, conveying abundance, and at times times associated with imagery of Ea. It was also depicted as food laid on a table (cf. Hansen 1963, 162, pl. 5; Keel and Uehlinger 1996, 44, fig. 48).

398 Frankfort 1939, pls. 10:e,i, 12:a,c, 14:b,g, 16:b,e, 25:g; Porada 1948, no. 901; Collon 1986, 87, nos. 112–113; Buchanan 1966, no. 832; Collon 1988, 76, 10; 2001, no. 242.

399 Porada 1990, 73.

400 For crossed animals on cylinder seals, Delaporte 1923, pl. 90:7,14; Porada 1948, no. 703; Amiet 1973, no. 528. On stamp seals, Legrain 1925, no. 845; von

5.2.2. Divine Symbols in kudurrus and in Glyptic Art

Despite the fact that both first-millennium Babylonian glyptic art and *kudurru* imagery reveal a clear tendency of avoiding anthropomorphic representations of deities by replacing them with symbols, some differences between the two media are apparent. Thus, most of the emblems representing Kassite gods were not rendered in first-millennium glyptics. The seals exploit a smaller selection of symbols than the *kudurru*s, and the emblems of Marduk, Nabu and Sin are more common on the seals than on the *kudurru*s. The horned mitres, emblems of Anu and Enlil, are usually absent from the seals; and Ea, represented by a ram-headed sceptre and the goat-fish on seals, is also symbolized by a turtle on the *kudurru*s. While on *kudurru*s the dog usually accompanies Gula, it is often depicted as an independent symbol on Late Babylonian seals. Whereas on the seals a gesturing worshipper is usually depicted, he is absent from the *kudurru*s (exceptions may be seen in figs. 4, 8). Occasionally, specifically on cylinder seals, the emblems appear on a mountain-like rise placed on a pedestal (fig. 154), absent from the *kudurru* scenes.

Notwithstanding the above differences between *kudurru*s and first-millennium Babylonian glyptics, the two types of artifacts share not only a predilection for symbolic, rather than anthropomorphic, portrayals of divinities, but also exhibit some common symbols. These include the two animal-shaped hybrids of scorpion-bird-man, the wedge, the ram-headed sceptre, the goat-fish, the lamp, the lion-headed sceptre and occasionally a lightning bolt. These emblems and the convention of mounting symbols on rectangular pedestals—evident both on *kudurru*s and Babylonian seals—demonstrate the link between them. Only relatively few symbols depicted on Kassite seals are continued in first-millennium glyptics—mainly the dog, the centaur (in the beginning of the first millennium only), a crescent and a star. The difference between these two glyptic groups with regard to

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Osten 1934, no. 538; 1936, no. 135; Buchanan and Moorey 1988, 60, nos. 376, 377; MacGinnis 1995, nos. 130, 155; Keel and Uehlinger 1996, pl. III; Jakob-Rost 1997, no. 377; Ehrenberg 1999, 29, 100, no. 210.

divine representations corresponds to the difference between *kudurru*s and Kassite glyptics discussed above (Chapter 2, § 2.3).

The iconographical associations between *kudurru*s and first-millennium seals correspond in nature to the continuity of Babylonian artistic traditions demonstrated by other Babylonian artifacts. Such continuity can be found in details, such as the diadem worn by heroic figures, in the repeated representation of the emblems of Marduk, Nabu and Gula, and in depictions of fish-*apkallu* and human-faced fish (*kulullû*), both on Kassite and first-millennium seals. Moreover, the cut technique and moulded Babylonian style, employed on seals of both periods, illuminate the conservative nature of Babylonian seal cutting. First-millennium Babylonian monuments that followed second-millennium traditions also attest to the process of continuity between second- and first-millennium Babylonia. For example, glazed bricks were used for the building of Dûr-Kurigalzu, on the one hand, and Nebuchadnezzar's Ishtar Gates and the Processional Way in Babylon, on the other. Similarly, the plans of the Ninmah temple and the contemporaneous great palace of Nebuchadnezzar II resemble structures from the Old Babylonian period rather than their Assyrian counterparts.[401] This tendency accords well with the Late Babylonian sense of antiquarism revealed in imagery, in particular glyptic art,[402] as well as in the textual evidence. According to contemporary written sources, ancient texts of earlier Mesopotamian rulers were unearthed already during the reign of Nabopolassar and were incorporated in royal inscriptions and in various works of art aimed at legitimizing the new Chaldean dynasty.[403] Nevertheless, the conclusion that *kudurru*s were the main source of influence on first-millennium Babylonian seals with regard to the depiction of gods by means of symbolism rests crucially on the fact that maximum use of divine emblems was made both on the *kudurru*s and seventh- to fifth-century Babylonian seals.

Indeed, it is in the Late Babylonian period when the rejection of anthropomorphic deities in visual art reached its peak. This is demonstrated not only by numerous glyptic examples and a dearth of human-shaped deities in other artistic media, but also by the above-

401 Porada 1947, 154ff., 162–163; 1948, 145 and n. 1; Frankfort 1996, 201–205.

402 Ehrenberg 1998.

403 Beaulieu 2003.

noted process of divinization of attributes. The fact that hybrids, animals, or demons which hitherto appeared mainly as attributes became divine symbols and foci of cult in devotional scenes (figs. 160, 163, 164, 165–169) is to be understood in light of the widespread contemporary Assyro-Babylonian propensity toward symbolization.[404] This predilection, transformed into the decorum of avoiding portrayals of anthropomorphic deities when shown outside the temple sphere, may have been accelerated by an increasing first-millennium Babylonian world view that perceived earthly phenomena as metaphors and signs "read" by the small group of literate diviners, priests and scribes. This course, which was attested in first-millennium Babylonia, probably caused by intensified Aramaization and an increasing separation between spoken Aramaic and written Sumerian and Akkadian languages.[405] As literate groups, especially scribes, were obviously close to the seal cutters, one may assume an even greater stimulation for replacing human-shaped deities by their symbols in glyptic art.

404 For other aspects of the first-millennium Babylonian process of divine symbolization, see van der Toorn 1997b, 2.

405 Michalowski 1990, 395; see also Bottéro 2001, 71.

CHAPTER SIX

GOD AND KING VYING FOR THE EYE OF THE BEHOLDER

NON-ANTHROPOMORPHIC REPRESENTATIONS OF DEITIES IN FIRST-MILLENNIUM ASSYRIA

6.1. Non-Anthropomorphic Deities in First-Millennium Assyrian Monuments

6.1.1. Royal Stelae and Rock Reliefs

Monumental Assyrian art shows a marked difference from the imagery of smaller contemporary artifacts with regard to divine portrayals. As shown above (Chapter 4), the human-shaped deity was a dominant theme on Assyrian ninth- to eighth-century cylinder seals, whereas it was usually replaced by a symbol on other Assyrian artifacts. This tendency was already attested on the Broken Obelisk of Aššur-Bel-kala, discussed above, on which divine symbols are shown on the upper part of the sunken relief at the top of the monument (Chapter 2, § 2.4, fig. 54).

The replacement of anthropomorphic deities by divine symbols in Assyria is best demonstrated in monumental imagery on rock reliefs and on royal stelae dated from the reigns of Ashurnasirpal to Esarhaddon, and probably during the reign of Ashurbanipal as well. The significant role of these official monuments in Neo-Assyrian propaganda is attested by the many references that mention the monuments in Assyrian texts, as well as by their descriptions in visual renderings—mainly free-standing stelae.[406] The role of the rock reliefs, often found at remote places far from settlements, was to ensure divine protection for various royal activities, such as military campaigns or irrigation projects. The function of these religio-magical monuments—which were often inaccessible, almost invisible and located far from the Assyrian main cities, sometimes in foreign

406 Morandi-Bonacossi 1988, 139–143; Börker-Klähn 1982, nos. 146–147, 151 (the bronze coverings on Balawat doors), 176 (a cylinder seal).

lands—was also to signal Assyrian expansion and dominion.[407] The affinity between the rock reliefs and the free-standing stelae is conveyed not only by their similar theme—of the king gesturing before divine symbols, but also by the fact that many of the rock renderings are of stela-like form (e.g., Mila Mirge, fig. 84).[408]

The stelae and rock reliefs were erected within the boundaries of Assyria itself: for example, the commemorative monuments erected by Ashurnasirpal II at Nimrud in the Ninurta temple and in the North-West Palace (fig. 173); those installed by Shamshi-Adad V's in the temple of Nabu at Nimrud; and the stela of Adad-nirari III found in the shrine at Tell Rimah (fig. 175). In other instances, monuments were set up in subjugated territories with the purpose of denoting Assyrian rule—exemplified by the Euphrates Kenk relief of Shalmaneser III; the Ferhatli rock relief; the Sabaʿa (fig. 176); Antakya and Pazarcik (figs. 184, 186) stelae of Adad-nirari III; the Mila Mirge and Iran monuments of Tiglath-pileser III (figs. 84, 177); Sargon monuments found at Tang-i Var, Godintepe and Larnaka; and the Zinjirli, Shikaft-i Gulgul and Til Barsip stelae of Esarhaddon (figs. 103, 104). At times these monuments were erected in connection with royal engineering projects, such as the Tigris Tunnel rock relief of Shalmaneser III, the Kurh stela found on the Tigris south of Diyarbakir (fig. 174), and the many rock reliefs of Sennacherib at Bavian, Maltai (figs. 94–97) and Faida.[409]

Following the custom of erecting stone stelae, which existed as early as the fourteenth century, as exemplified by the Ashur *Stelenreihen*,[410] Assyrian stelae became common from the expansion of the Neo-Assyrian Empire during the reign of Ashurnasirpal II and reached their peak during the reign of his son, Shalmaneser III. However, whereas the earlier Middle Assyrian stelae were established either by kings or by high officials and only bore an inscription, by the

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407 Kreppner 2002, 375–376.

408 Cf. some of the rock reliefs in Nahr el-Kelb, north of Beirut, Börker-Klähn 1982, nos. 213–216.

409 Börker-Klähn 1982, nos. 136, 137, 16, 164, 173, 175, 217–218, 190, 207–210, 223; Levine 1972; Taşyürek 1974; 1975; Donbaz 1990; Tadmor 1994, 91–110; Postgate 1973; Frame 1999.

410 Andrae 1913.

first millennium the erection of such monuments became almost exclusively a royal prerogative. In accordance with this modification and in order to better serve the function of royal propaganda, both rock reliefs and stone stelae were adorned with a pictorial rendering of the figure of the king, usually along with an inscription elaborating on his royal exploits. The king's image rendered on these monuments—termed *ṣalam šarrutiya* ("my royal image")—is represented in a devotional stance before divine symbols, gesturing in the Assyrian *ubana taraṣu* ("finger pointing") gesture, which was modified under Sennacherib and later with the Babylonian gesture of *appa labānu* ("nose rubbing"; e.g., figs. 94–97, 103–104).[411]

The large scale of the gesturing king, who stands in front of small icons of divine emblems, is the most telling trait of these Assyrian monuments with regard to the ascending status of the Assyrian monarch and to his relation with the gods. As discussed in Chapter 4, § 4.1.2, the encounter of the royal image with the divine in Assyrian palatial decoration was almost totally ignored by eliminating large-scale portrayals of major deities and by gradually removing apotropaic supernatural large beings from the very body of the king.[412] Thus, the Neo-Assyrian stone stelae and the rock reliefs became the only genre of official monuments in which royal and divine entities were juxtaposed. Hence, these monuments are essential for an understanding not only of the relationship between god and king, but also of the role of non-anthropomorphic divine emblems in royal Assyrian monumental art.

Indeed, the discrepancy between the scale of divine icons and royal image not only catches the eye of the beholder, but can also be considered an innovative trait of these monuments, in comparison with older, traditional Mesopotamian imagery. Although some difference between the god and the worshipper is suggested in Mesopotamian adoration scenes by representing the height of both standing and seated figures at approximately the same level, nevertheless, in Mesopotamian art god and king are usually displayed

411 Magen 1986, 64.

412 Ornan forthcoming (a).

on similar scales.[413] The *isokephalia* principle, according to which heads of all participants in a pictorial rendering (or at least the prominent ones) are shown on the same plane, dominated Mesopotamian art from the later part of the fourth millennium. This may have been one of the factors for representing all figures, including human and divine, on a similar scale and generally avoiding a huge gap between these two entities. In contrast to these, the renderings conveyed on Assyrian stelae and rock reliefs reveal an astounding discrepancy in size between the two, continuing the trend evident in the Broken Obelisk (fig. 54). This variance in scale diverges from earlier Middle Assyrian monuments, such as the scene on the first pedestal of Tukulti-Ninurta I (fig. 51), and from later Late Babylonian cylinder and stamp seals (e.g., figs. 153, 154), on which humans and divinities represented by symbols are more or less equal in size. On Neo-Assyrian stelae and rock reliefs, however, the huge royal figure dwarfed the small divine emblems, shown above the king's head or in front of his face, and thus governs the visual message. This accentuation of royal image is hence to be considered together with Assyrian palace wall reliefs, on which the king is the main and only protagonist.[414] The royal image on the rock reliefs and stelae did not "manifest only the institution of kingship",[415] but also highlights its complex relationship with divine authority. The very choice to portray the divine by an emblem—and a small one at that—emphasizes royal supremacy within the picture. The avoidance of depicting major deities in architectural palace decoration and the gap between a king and a god represented by a non-anthropomorphic emblem clearly mirror the political needs of the Assyrian ruler, which, it seems, subverted religious needs. By no means, however, does this imply any secular notion of Assyrian art.[416] The basic framework of Assyrian monumental art continued to reflect religious beliefs, and only within the limits of that religious context could the royal propaganda be maneuvered to exalt the king.

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413 For examples from the late fourth millennium onward, see Moortgat 1969, pl. 19, 21, 42, 114, 116, 126–127, 194, 209, 210.

414 Winter 1981b, 17 and *passim*.

415 Winter 1997, 377.

416 Contra Winter 1981b, 20.

6.1.2. Non-Royal Stelae

On a few monuments, worshippers other than the king—high-ranking Assyrian officials, usually provincial governors, who became almost as powerful as the Assyrian king in certain areas of the Empire—appear as the adorant standing before the divine symbols. One such monument, found at Tell Abta west of Musul, was set up by Bel-Harran-bel-uṣur, who probably began his long career under Shalmaneser IV, in the first quarter of the eighth century, as the *nāgir ekalli* (the palace herald) and ended it under Tiglath-pileser III. This high official, who was probably a eunuch, as suggested by his beardless face, was the governor of the city of Tell Abta. The inscription on the monument proclaims that Bel-Harran-bel-uṣur had established a city, which was named after him and not the king. This information accords well with the composition selected for the stela: the image of Bel-Harran-bel-uṣur gesturing before divine emblems. On this stela, this theme, usually reserved for the king, reflects the weakening of Assyrian central rule during the first half of the eighth century.[417] Another depiction of a high-ranking official is found on a rock relief from Cudi Dağ, east of the Tigris near Cizre in eastern Turkey. The armed worshipper, bare-headed and bare-footed, represents a dignitary. He is shown gesturing before only one symbol—a small crescent moon—in the *ubana taraṣu* Assyrian manner of veneration, suggesting that the monument should probably be dated to before Sennacherib (fig. 178).[418]

The inclination to depart from any representation of divine presence, including symbolic, on official monuments, not dissimilar to palatial renderings, is further attested on a few monuments erected by high officials. The original Assyrian theme of depicting a ruler or a high official gesturing before divine symbols was modified on these

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417 Börker-Klähn 1982, 219, no. 232; Kuan 2001, 137; Blocher 2001, 303–304.

418 Nogaret 1985. The figure holds what seems to be a large sword in his left hand, instead of the ceremonial mace carried by the king in royal monuments. A much later imitation of this theme appears on a late first-century CE stela found at Ashur, on which a devotee gestures before emblems of celestial bodies (Pasinli 1996, 156, no. 192).

monuments by eliminating the divine presence altogether, leaving only the human worshipper, as, for example, on the stela dedicated to Adad by the eunuch Mushezib-Shamash, governer of the city of Duru, found at Anaz, near Urfa (fig. 179).[419] A similar tendency is revealed on the mid-eighth-century Aramaic-inscribed funerary stela of Sin-zer-ibni, priest of Sin, found at Nerab near Aleppo, on which only a human figure is shown.[420] The tendency to remove all divine representations from pictorial renderings, leaving only the devotee, is also encountered on small finds, as shown on a gold pendant from Nimrud, which depicts only a worshipper in an adoration stance (fig. 180).[421] It is the gesturing stance of the worshipper that signifies the theme as veneration of the divine, in spite of the absence of the addressee of the cultic activity.

As suggested by Na'aman, Assyrian impact is evident on alphabetic inscribed monuments in various kingdoms west of the Euphrates during the second half of the ninth century, such as the Mesha, Bar-Hadad and Zakur inscriptions.[422] Similarly, royal Assyrian imagery also inspired the themes displayed on official monuments erected in these areas by non-Assyrian rulers, who emulated certain Assyrian traits and embedded them with local traditions. This is exemplified by monuments set up by the kings of Sam'al at Zinjirli: by Kilamuwa, who ruled during the later half of the ninth century, and by Barrakib, the last known ruler of the kingdom of Sam'al and a contemporary of Tiglath-pileser III (figs. 181, 182). The placement of the kings of Sam'al opposite the inanimate divine emblems on these monuments recalls the theme of the Assyrian king gesturing toward divine symbols, depicted on the *ṣalam šarrutiya* stelae and rock reliefs. Assyrian influence on these examples is reinforced by the selection of emblems in front of which the king of Sam'al stands, representing a mixture of symbols common in Assyrian imagery (e.g., the horned mitre) with local ones (e.g., the janiform horned head or the yoke). On another Barrakib stela (fig. 183), also inscribed with an

419 Börker-Klähn 1982, no. 233 (and cf. no. 254 from Tell Halaf and possibly no. 234 from Ashur). Blocher 2001, 300–301, fig. 3.

420 Donner and Röllig 1968–69, 45, 274–275, no. 225, pl. xxiv.

421 Mallowan 1966, 440, fig. 366.

422 Na'aman 2000, 95.

Aramaic dedication to the moon god Lord of Harran, the king is shown facing a scribe beneath a crescent-on-a-pole, recalling the above-mentioned Babylonian *kudurrus* (fig. 144). The gesture of the scribe, raising a closed fist with a pointing thumb, and the specific attributes—a flower and a cup—carried by the king on these monuments demonstrate that such iconographical borrowings were inspired by local features, embedded in Assyrian imagery.[423]

6.1.3. Development of Symbols on Assyrian Monuments

On monuments dated to the reigns of Ashurnasirpal, Shalmaneser III and Shamshi-Adad V, there are usually five symbols shown in front of the gesturing king: a horned mitre, a star, a winged disc, a crescent moon and a lightning bolt. At times, the seven-dot emblem representing the *sebetti* is added, for example on Ashurnasirpal's Banquet Stela commemorating the inauguration of the North-West Palace (fig. 173). An addition of two divine symbols to the above-mentioned five emblems is attested on stelae dated to Adad-nirari III: the *marru* spade of Marduk and the stylus of Nabu (fig. 175). These emblems, standing for the head of the Babylonian pantheon and for his son, were incorporated into Assyrian divine symbolism in both monumental and glyptic art during the reign of Adad-nirari III, who had a special affinity to Nabu. This relationship is reflected by temples dedicated to the god in Nineveh and Nimrud and by the king's fulfilling cultic roles in northern Babylonia.[424]

A further shift from the traditional Assyrian selection of divine symbols inspired by non-Assyrian imagery during the reign of Adad-nirari III, is manifested on a rectangular pillar-shaped monument found at Sabaʿa, south of the Singar Mountain (fig. 176). The monument was erected by Nergal-eresh, governor of Rasappa, *limmu*, in the years 803 and 775.[425] Among the ten divine emblems in front of the gesturing king, the ring-shaped emblem on the left surmounting a high pole with two tassels, and the lower symbol below the lightning bolt mirror the divine symbolism common in the western part of the

423 Donner and Röllig 1968–69, 30–34, 232–237, nos. 24, 216–218; Tropper 1993, 5, 24–26; Mayer-Opificius 1995, 335–336, 338; Ornan, forthcoming (b).

424 Reade 1977, 42; Herbordt 1992, 74; Annus 2002, 44.

425 Blocher 2001, 302–303 (with bibliography).

Assyrian Empire. The first symbol recalls the crescent-on-a-pole representing Sin of Harran, common in these areas in both monumental and miniature art (e.g., figs. 184–186). The second emblem, consisting of a horizontal stick-like figure accompanied by four globes, is rendered, with some variations, on stelae discovered in Tell el-Aš'ari and 'Awas in Syria, Gaziantepe in Turkey and Bethsaida on the eastern bank of the Sea of Galilee; it alludes to Sin, the moon god of Harran, as well as to the storm god.[426]

Another type of imagery is conveyed on inscribed stelae found in the districts of Antakya and Pazarcik in south-east Turkey (figs. 184, 186). The stelae, erected as part of the political activities of Adad-nirari III in north-west Syria, demonstrate a shift in the divine symbolic representation of official Assyrian imagery. In contrast to other Assyrian monuments, these do not bear a few divine symbols, but only one large emblem—a crescent-on-a-pole. As previously mentioned, this symbol has been identified as the symbol of Sin of Harran on the stela of Barrakib from Zinjirli (fig. 183). In addition, instead of being accompanied by one large royal figure, the crescent-on-a-pole rendered on the Antakya stela (fig. 184) is flanked by two identical worshippers, a pattern common in glyptic imagery of Syria and possibly representing the (double) figure of the *turtānu* Šamši-ilu (cf. figs. 74, 185). Furthermore, on the Pazarcik stela (fig. 186) only the huge symbol remains, with no worshipper.[427]

Assyrian appropriation of the crescent-on-a-pole for royal monuments accords very well with other Assyrian efforts to honour and exalt the cult of Sin from Harran. This is evident in the refurbishing of the Ehulhul temple of Sin at Harran by Shalmaneser III in the ninth century and by Ashurbanipal in the seventh century. It is also seen in the frequent references to the god in Sargonid texts. The exaltation of the moon god of Harran was intensified by Nabonidus, King of Babylonia, in the mid-sixth century. Harran's geographical location at the junction of trade routes between Syria and Mesopotamia, as well as its strategic location for Assyria's expansion to the west, were among the major factors leading to Harran's importance in the Neo-Assyrian period and the rise in the status of Sin

426 Keel 1994; Bernett and Keel 1998; Ornan 2001b.

427 Donbaz 1990. Kuan 2001, 138.

of Harran. The Assyrian kings encouraged the prestige of the ancient centre of Sin at Harran: they adopted and participate in its cult; and invoked its deities in their inscriptions. The high status of Harran is demonstrated by its being the only non-Assyrian city, apart from Babylon, in whose cult Assyrian rulers had an interest. In singling out the crescent-on-a-pole and displaying it as a solitary emblem on their western monuments, the Assyrian kings publicized their devotion and loyalty to the moon god of Harran, which, at least in the west, became a religious symbol standing both for Empire and for king.[428] The reduction of the number of deities represented on the stelae of Adad-nirari III, as well as on other eighth–seventh-century non-inscribed monuments found west of or in the vicinity of Harran[429] to only one divine emblem (fig. 185), accords well with the general inclination of contemporaneous Assyrian art to refrain from the depiction of human-shaped deities.

Some modification in the selection of divine symbols is encountered on monuments of Tiglath-pileser III, in which there is an addition of a ram-headed sceptre, traditionally alluding to Ea, as shown on the Iran stela and on the stela-shaped rock relief of Mila Mirge (figs. 84b, 177). The depiction of this symbol is apparently not continued on monuments dated to Sargon, but is shown on the Bavian rock reliefs portraying Sennachrib gesturing before divine symbols. Indeed, concurrently with the tendency to display human-shaped deities during Sennacherib's time, divine symbols were also represented on the monuments erected by this king. Representations of Sennachrib gesturing toward divine symbols are traced on eleven rock reliefs at Bavian (e.g., fig. 187), on a rock relief from Shiru-Malikta, situated some 45 km. north of Mosul, on six reliefs at Cudi Dağ and on two stelae from Nineveh (fig. 188).[430] Like the unique divine anthropomorphic imagery of the king (discussed above, Chapter 4, § 4.1.1), the choice of divine symbols rendered on these monuments of Sennacherib reveal two exceptional features, compared with the royal Assyrian monuments that preceded them. The first is the addition of "new" emblems not otherwise found in representations of symbols on

428 Holloway 1995, 287–291.

429 Spycket 1974; Keel 1994, 131–143, nos. 1, 2, 4–6, 8–10.

430 Börker-Klähn 1982, nos. 180–185, 189–199, 202, 203, 204; Nogaret 1984.

royal stelae. These include a perching bird depicted alongside the usual horned mitre, star, winged disc, crescent and lightning bolt rendered on the Cudi Dağ reliefs, and a sceptre topped by a double-horned-animal-head terminal shown on the Bavian reliefs, alongside a moon-and-crescent, a winged disc, a lightning bolt, a *marru* and a wedge, a star, *sebetti* dots, a ram-headed sceptre and three horned hats. Although the perching bird is apparently not the same symbol shown on Babylonian *kudurru*s and the identification of the sceptre with the double animal heads is disputable,[431] the formal affinity of these symbols to Babylonian imagery may be another example of Sennacherib's emulation of Babylonian divine symbolism. This inclination is also demonstrated by positioning of the emblems of these monuments on pedestals, as was common in Babylonia since Kassite times.

The three horned mitres, also shown on the two stelae from Nineveh, exemplify the second feature characteristic of Sennacherib. Assuming that when shown alone, the horned mitre indeed represented Ashur, it is conceivable to identify the two other mitres as alluding to Enlil and Anu. By adding two identical horned mitres to that of Ashur, Sennacherib not only reconfirmed the central role of his god, but also exalted his status vis-à-vis the leading team of the pan-Mesopotamian pantheon. As shown above, the unique imagery of Sennacherib continued to a certain degree during Esarhaddon's reign, attested by the sceptre with the double animal heads among seven other divine emblems on his stela from Zinjirli, which commemorates his Egyptian campaign (fig. 104b).

In addition to the divine emblems represented as objects of veneration on Assyrian stelae and rock reliefs, symbols representing deities also appear as jewels adorning the royal image. The role of these emblems, attached to the very body of the king, illuminates their function as protective amulets and sheds light on the basic apotropaic nature of jewellery in antiquity. When strung to ceremonial necklaces (*dumāqū*) worn by the king, these emblems signify the latter as a *šangû* high priest.[432] These ceremonial necklaces are composed of the divine symbols of the five major deities of the Assyrian pantheon,

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431 Seidl 1989, 148–149, 160.

432 Magen 1986, 54–55; *CAD* 3, *dumāqu b*, 179.

Ashur, Shamash, Sin, Ishtar and Adad, commonly shown on royal monuments. Ceremonial necklaces appear on two stelae of Ashurnasirpal (e.g., fig. 173), on the pivotal relief behind the throne in the North-West Palace (fig. 108a), on the Kurh stela of Shalmaneser III (fig. 174) and on his statues from Ashur and Fort Shalmaneser at Nimrud.[433] A ceremonial necklace with divine emblems is also worn by Tiglath-pileser III on a slab from the South-West Palace at Nimrud, where it specifically signifies the king trampling his enemy.[434] Among the symbols represented as royal jewels is a Maltese cross rendered as a single pendant on the stelae of Shamshi-Adad V from Nimrud and of Adad-nirari III from Tell Rimah (fig. 175). In these cases a large Maltese-cross amulet replaces the five or six astral emblems. The prominent position of the Maltese cross may be regarded as an outcome of the Babylonian campaigns of Shmashi-Adad and of his favourable attitude toward the worship of Nabu. However, it is hard to establish the specific god signified by the emblem: as has been shown it could symbolize Marduk or Nabu, or may have stood for a Babylonized version of the symbol of Shamash. It could also be associated with Ninurta, as implied by the lengthy hymn to this god inscribed on the above stela of Shamshi-Adad V.[435] The role of divine symbols as objects of worship and as royal signifiers on these monuments highlights the dual facets of these icons: representing divine entities and at the same time signalling the cultic role of the king.

The preponderance of non-anthropomorphic representations of the divine in palatial decoration is well demonstrated in the first millennium through the many depictions of stylized trees, representing date palms, in Assyrian palaces. These trees were especially common on reliefs in the North-West Palace at Nimrud, but also appear in royal residences of later kings. They were displayed on the pivotal wall of Ashurnasirpal's throne room behind the royal seat, as well as in

433 Börker-Klähn 1982, nos. 136, 137, 148; Layard 1849, pl. 25; Strommenger 1970, 16–17, figs. 4, 5, pls. 4a, 6a. (on Shalmaneser's statue from Nimrud only three divine emblems hang).

434 Barnett and Falkner 1962, pl. XCV–XCVI; Magen 1986,55.

435 Börker-Klähn 1982, nos. 161, 164, 216; Ehrenberg 2002a, 66–67, 69; Calmeyer 1984, 140; Magen 1986, 54; Annus 2002, 44.

corners, entrances and other focal points of the buildings. In some cases they may have functioned as apotropaic elements, while in others they convey a message regarding the well-being of the land, artistically articulated through a symbolic act of pollination, performed by the king and/or the benevolent *apkallu* demons.[436] In addition, one should not rule out the possibility that, like the above-noted astral-shaped jewels on Assyrian stelae, these trees could serve concurrently as benevolent emblems and apotropaic elements held by the *apkallu* demons, as well as adorning the royal dress (figs. 190, 191). Nevertheless, the very choice of an inanimate, reiterated floral motif indeed enhances the overall tendency of Assyrian art to depart from the anthropomorphic portrayal of deities.

Similarly to the scarcity of anthropomorphic representations of deities on Assyrian reliefs, divine emblems were also rarely included in palatial wall decoration. A winged disc (without an anthropomorphic figure) is mainly found in cultic and hunting activities depicted on royal garments (alongside a star and a crescent moon) depicted on reliefs from the North-West Palace of Ashurnasirpal (e.g., fig. 189, cf. fig. 190). A non-anthropomorphic emblem composed of two addorsed bulls is shown on a few war standards from the same palace.[437] A winged disc and a star-within-a-disc are shown in the surrender scenes of both Sua of Gilzanu and Yehu of Israel on the Black Obelisk of Shalmaneser III. Three astral symbols—a crescent-and-moon, a plain disc encircled by a larger one and a Maltese cross—are shown next to the enthroned figure of Tiglath-pileser III receiving high officials as part of his Babylonian campaign, depicted on a slab attributed to the Central Palace at Nimrud (fig. 192).[438]

The dominance of the winged disc in the above examples accords well with the conspicuous role of this symbol in the North-West Palace, where it is sometimes shown above the stylized date palm,

436 Porter 1993b; Russell 1998, 687–693; Winter 2003. See also Parpola 1993 for a different interpretation.

437 Layard 1949, pls. 5–6, 39B, 22, 27, 48:6.

438 Börker-Klähn 1982, no. 152A1–2; Barnett and Falkner 1962, pl. VIII.

thus constituting a unified symbolic group of two elements.[439] Although, as noted, the winged disc displayed on the reliefs of the North-West Palace reveals some concession to anthropomorphism, illustrated by the small figure of Ashur standing within the disc, it is the large non-anthropomorphic element—the tree (and the double figure of the king)—which occupies most of the pictorial field of the slab.[440] Wall decoration in which date-palm features are repeated was most common in the Assyrian palace, probably conveying abundance; as noted, it was also apparent on monumental decoration of the throne hall in Nebuchadnezzar's Southern Palace at Babylon, adorned with stylized volutes and date palms.[441]

The possible polyvalent role of divine astral emblems may be demonstrated by their representations as apotropaic elements on war chariots depicted in the martial narratives of Assyrian wall reliefs. The symbols—a winged disc, a rosette, a star framed by a disc, a crescent moon and *sebetti*—are shown mainly on yoke poles connecting the horses' neck harness with the chariot box. These are exemplified on various slabs from throne room B in the North-West Palace at Nimrud and by a wall relief of Tiglath–pileser III from the South-West Palace at Nimrud, in which the capture of Ashtaratu is depicted (figs. 193, 194).[442] In contrast to the central position of the symbols on stelae, these emblems are very small, sometimes hardly traced, and appear as secondary elements. Their small scale and protective role recall the second category of human-shaped deities portrayed in palatial reliefs (discussed above, Chapter 4, § 4.1.2), chosen not for their own merit, but by virtue of their apotropaic function in military activities. The few representations of divine emblems on Assyrian wall reliefs emphasize the tendency to avoid divine presence on Assyrian palatial monuments and shed light on their implicit message to exalt the king.

Worship of divine symbols is visually documented in representations of cultic ceremonies that took place outside the

439 Lambert 1985, 436, 439–440; Parpola 1993, *passim*; Albenda 1994 (with bibliography).

440 Layard 1849, pl. 25; Winter 1981, 20–21.

441 Winter 2003.

442 Layard 1849, pls. 10, 11, 14, 22, 27, 28, 31; Barnett and Falkner 1962, pl. LXIX.

temple, as shown on a Sargonid slab from room 14 at Khorsabad, which depicts standard worship.[443] As this ceremony takes place in an Assyrian military camp outside the deity's shrine, it may recall the depiction on the Sippar Tablet, discussed above, in which the emblem is shown outside the sacred building (fig. 65). It may also allude to the role of the above-noted Hittite *ḫuwaši* standing stones in an open-space cult sanctuary. Applying the mouth-washing ritual, usually carried out for divine human-shaped statues, to divine emblems further corroborates the non-anthropomorphic traits of Assyrian religious rituals. It may also be implied by the absence of references to human-shaped Ashur in Assyrian texts, which led to the suggestion that the god was not represented anthropomorphically in his temple, as was perhaps the case with the Urartian Haldi. References such as "the emblem has been set up ... it is the god Nabu", which appear in a Neo-Assyrian letter, further demonstrate the exalted status of divine symbols.[444]

Cultic gesturing before divine emblems, with other symbols present, is also attested on the Black Stone of Lord Aberdeen, acquired at Babylon. This small rectangular monument bears an inscription of Esarhaddon commemorating his rebuilding of Babylon after its destruction by Sennacherib; it concludes with a declaration of restoring the *kidinnūtu* status of privileges and freedom to the city. The reverse of the Black Stone is engraved with eight pictorial elements arranged in two registers (fig. 195). The inscription, the choice of the black stone and its pictorial renderings are reminiscent of Babylonian tradition, but, as shown by Porter, were clearly articulated to fit Assyrian political aims.[445] The imagery conveyed on the Black Stone accordingly displays a combination of Babylonian and Assyrian features, arranged in a composition not encountered elsewhere. The horned mitre and the striding bull are symbols which are known in Babylonian iconography to stand for Anu or Enlil and Adad, but which are also rendered in Assyrian art. The figure of the

443 Albenda 1986, pl. 137. Cf. Pongratz-Leisten *et al.* 1992.

444 Walker and Dick 1999, 71; Frankfort 1996, 137; Mettinger 1995, 42–43, 47.

445 Porter 1993a.

gesturing king is clearly that of the Assyrian ruler.[446] The stylized tree is also a typical Assyrian feature, not otherwise found decorating a pedestal, as the small tree seen here. Most of the visual elements—the hill, the seeder plow, the naturalistic palm tree, the square with circled corners, the (royal) worshipper and the horned-mitre-on-a-pedestal—also appear on three clay prisms of Esarhaddon, which report the king's building activities in Babylon. Some of these elements—a royal worshipper, a striding bull, a seeder plow, and a naturalistic (fig) tree combined with a bird and a striding lion—also appear on glazed panels of temple façades of Sargon at Khorsabad. Based on a reference to Esarhaddon in one of the above prisms, these visual elements were understood by scholars as specific signs used for writing the name of the king, termed by Roaf and Zgoll as astroglyphs.[447] If, indeed, these visual elements are legible signs, this provides support for the above-noted suggestion of increasing first-millennium Babylonian and Assyrian symbolization. Some of these astroglyphic signs also functioned as divine symbols, thus serving a dual purpose. This highlights the multi-faceted role of ancient emblems, which are to be interpreted as referring to various functions and meanings simultaneously.

6.2. Non-Anthropomorphic Deities in First-Millennium Assyrian Glyptics

The replacement of divine anthropomorphic figures with their emblems became most common in seventh-century Assyrian glyptics, as demonstrated by Herbordt through various sealings stamped on dated tablets from Assyria's main cities Ashur, Nineveh and Nimrud, as well as provincial Assyrian cities, such as Carchemish.[448] Porada has noted this inclination of Assyrian glyptic imagery in her

446 Cf. the statues of Ashurnasirpal and Shalmaneser as "the king before a god" or as an *išipu* priest, where he is shown bare-headed (Magen 1986, 41–45, 69, pls. 6:2–5, 14:1,3).

447 Finkel and Reade 1996; Roaf and Zgoll 2001 (with bibliography).

448 Herbordt 1992, 83–84; and cf. the dearth of human-shaped deities depicted on non-provenanced seventh-century seals cut in the late drilled style, Porada 1948, nos. 704–723.

discussion of a cylinder seal from Khorsabad (fig. 196) depicting a worshipper gesturing before a crescent-on-a-pole, emblem of Sin of Harran: "the crescent staff appears behind the table where it is presumably substituting for a deity".[449] In addition to the seal from Khorsabad, the substitution of human-shaped deities with inanimate objects, animals, or fantastic creatures is attested on other few Assyrian glyptic finds, such as sealings from Nimrud and Nineveh or Carchemish (e.g., figs. 197–204).[450] These examples confirm that symbol worship was known in Assyrian glyptics as early as the last quarter of the eighth century.

The introduction of this theme into Assyrian miniature imagery coincided with the onset of extensive use of stamp seals in Assyria during the reign of Sargon. As a type of seal common in the western parts of the Assyrian Empire for over a millennium, it reached Assyria as a consequence of its territorial expansion from the second half of the eighth century onward. The widespread distribution of these seals in Assyria also reflects strong Aramaization of Assyrian administration, which dictated the use of stamp, rather than cylinder, seals. The initial step in emulating this western artifact by Assyrian officials, however, occurred over a century earlier, during the reign of Shamaneser III, when it was adopted for seals used in royal administration.[451]

The late eighth-century Assyrian glyptic finds depicting symbol worship underscores the fact that although the theme is rightly considered to be a typical first-millennium Babylonian trait, and in particular is regarded as a hallmark of Late Babylonian glyptics, the theme was known in Assyria before it reached its pinnacle in seventh–fifth-century Babylonia. As the refrain from anthropomorphic portrayal of the divine was well established in ninth–eighth-century Assyrian monumental art, one may conjecture that glyptic art in this case followed a subject matter first encountered in contemporary monumental art.

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449 Porada 1948, 97; Delaporte 1910, no. 341; Herbordt 1992, 110, pl. 14:12.

450 Parker 1955, 111–112 (ND.807, 806, 809); Herbordt 1992, pl. 14:8.

451 Porada 1948, 96; Buchanan and Moorey 1988, 53; Winter 2000b, 54–60 with bibliography.

Indeed, the prevalent theme of ninth–eighth-century Assyrian cylinder seals, usually carved in the early drilled style, portrays many human-shaped gods and goddesses. Anthropomorphic deities, usually seated, were still being depicted, mainly on cylinder seals, during the seventh century, but these representations declined in frequency as the century wore on. Only in their late first-millennium development—in the seventh century—did Assyrian glyptics illustrate a more steady preference for avoidance of anthropomorphic portrayals of deities and their replacement with symbols. This tendency was also enhanced by other themes selected for seventh-century late-drilled style seals, such as combat and tree worship, in which major divine human-shaped images were not included.

The different attitude to divine representations conveyed through cylinder seals and large-scale sculptured works of art in the ninth–eighth centuries demonstrates a sharp contrast between these two contemporary media of Assyrian art. This divergence between miniature and monumental art recalls the thematic difference prevalent between Kassite cylinder seals and *kudurru*s, discussed above (Chapter 1, § 1.2). It might be assumed, therefore, that while traditional ninth–eighth-century Assyrian glyptic art continued an ancient Mesopotamian medium, monumental relief decoration, regarded as a new artistic venue—at least in aspiration and scope—could have initiated new approaches as it was less bound to age-old conventions. The Assyrian artisans responsible for carving stelae, rock and bas-reliefs were apparently less fettered by conservative pictorial conventions and were able to adopt innovative means of expression, inspired by late second-millennium prototypes. The new convention of portraying a deity by means of an emblem rather than an image befitted the general aim of Assyrian art, albeit covert, of aggrandizing the king. The choice of the non-anthropomorphic portrayal provided Assyrian artists with the assurance that in its pictorial form, the image of the king would be dominant and unrivalled.

6.2.1. Selected Divine Symbols in Assyrian Glyptics

6.2.1.1. The Spade and the Stylus

Typical Babylonian religious icons penetrated Assyrian imagery at least from the later part of the ninth century, when a shrine dedicated

to Nabu was erected at Nimrud.[452] This is also demonstrated by the representation of the *marru* spade of Marduk and the stylus of Nabu in ninth–eighth-century Assyrian cylinder seals (e.g., fig. 129), in the renderings of these symbols in monumental art since the time of Adad-nirari III, and by mounting Ashur on a *mušḫuššu* in monuments of Sennacherib (discussed above and in Chapter 4, § 4.1.1).[453] Assyrian inclination to adopt the emblems of Marduk and Nabu is further enhanced by small finds as a perforated pebble and a Babylonian-style stamped brick engraved with these emblems from Nimrud.[454]

In spite of the above and of the appearance of these symbols on seal impressions found in the main cities of Assyria (e.g., figs. 201, 202, 205),[455] the spade and the stylus were not often represented in Assyrian glyptics as the foci of cult. This observation accords well with the general impression that the seventh-century theme of a worshipper gesturing before divine symbols was less common in the Assyrian glyptic repertoire than on contemporary Babylonian seals. It must be emphasized, nonetheless, that a clear distinction between seventh-century Assyrian or Babylonian glyptic artifacts is not always possible. As has been postulated by Porada, a combination of both Assyrian and Babylonian features and styles is evident in the workmanship of seventh-century seals, especially after the Assyrian conquest of Babylon.[456] Yet in spite of the similar stylistic approach of

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452 Annus 2002, 44 (with previous bibliography).

453 Herbordt 1992, 74 (pl. 2: 7), 178, 197; Reade 1977, 42; Seidl 1989, 118–119. For the two emblems as secondary elements, see Moortgat 1940, 596 (belonging to the *limmu* Manu-kima-Ashur), 598–599, 602, 604–605, 609, 655–656; Porada 1948, nos. 650, 692–697, 699, 705, 711, 772.

454 Mallowan 1966, I, 270, fig. 252, II, 407 (for a photograph, see Curtis and Reade 1995, 107, no. 60); Livingstone 1989, 41, fig. 14.

455 See also Herbordt 1992, Nimrud: nos. 28, 101, pl. 14: 5, 6; Nineveh: pls. 14: 13, 15: 25; Ashur: Stronach and Lumsden 1992, 232. For the appropriation of the symbols of Marduk and Nabu as secondary motifs in ninth–eighth-century Assyrian glyptic, see the cylinder seal from the temple of Nabu at Nimrud, probably attributed to Adad-nirari III, depicting the adoration of anthropomorphic gods. accompanied by two huge emblems of these gods (Parker 1962, 28, pl. IX:1;cf. Porada 1948, no. 692).

456 Porada 1948, 72; Collon 2001, nos. 153, 237(?), 282–284; Collon 2003, 16*.

the two groups, they remain somewhat different in their selection of divine emblems. Thus, like the few depictions of Marduk's and Nabu's emblems, other Babylonian divine symbols, such as the dog, the lamp, the ram-headed sceptre, the goat-fish and the animal-like scorpion-man, were also less frequent in Assyrian glyptic imagery.

As demonstrated by the corpus of sealings published by Herbordt, the more common subject matter of Assyrian stamp seals is that of divine emblems depicted by themselves, with no worshipper. Among these are renderings of animals as the only visual elements on seals, mainly stamp seals, regarded as Syrian inspiration.[457] Within the repertoire of symbols depicted on Assyrian stamp seals, the star and the rosette, the winged disc and the moon crescent are the most common symbols (as foci of cult, see figs. 196, 200).

6.2.1.2. The Star and the Rosette

The star is a timeless symbol that has appeared as an independent element on a wide array of artifacts since the fourth millennium. In conjunction with a goddess, identified by an inscribed label as Ishtar, it appears on the Til Barsip and Šamaš-reš-uṣur monuments (figs. 64, 90), thus verifying its identification with this goddess in first-millennium Assyrian–Babylonian iconography. Further evidence is provided by the stela of Bel-Harran-bel-uṣur, the Larnaka Sargon stela, Sennacherib's relief from Bavian, and the Sippar Tablet.[458] The star's shape changed over time in the number of its points, which usually oscillated between six and eight.[459] At times it may be represented with a crescent moon or shown together with an ibex or a rosette (e.g., fig. 214), which also signify a female deity.[460]

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457 Herbordt 1992, 118, pl. 16.

458 Seidl 1989, 100 and n. 12.

459 Some stars—perhaps in provincial manufacture—have five or nine points (Marcus 1990, 136).

460 See below, Chapter 6, § 6.2.1.5. Herbordt 1992, pl. 14: 7, 9; Buchanan and Moorey 1988, nos. 54 (Kish), 232–233, 261; Hrouda 1962, pl. 63:27 (Tell Halaf); Loud and Altman 1938, pl. 58:110 (Khorsabad); Jakob-Rost 1997, nos. 366–367 (Ashur); Parker 1955, 24, figs. 26–27. Cf. Avigad and Sass 1997, nos. 94, 339.

The formal resemblance between the rosette and the star suggests that they both should be decoded in a similar manner as alluding to a female deity. Indeed, from the late fourth millennium, the rosette appeared in a huge array of visual representations, which reflected an association with a female deity in general and with Ishtar/Inanna in particular.[461] Rosettes made of sintered-quartz found in the Middle Assyrian Ishtar temple at Ashur and glazed bricks decorated with rosettes from first-millennium temples and other structures in Assyria and Babylonia accentuate the rosette's role as a religious symbol. Its wide distribution throughout the Assyrian Empire on garments and clothing accessories, jewels and weapons further demonstrates its benevolent amuletic function.[462]

6.2.1.3. The Winged Disc

The distinctive features of the Neo-Assyrian winged disc are its combination with anthropomorphic properties, on the one hand, and its representation above a stylized tree, on the other hand.[463] Both formulae were often combined into one icon composed of a winged disc, at times with heads, set above a stylized tree (e.g., figs. 133, 134,137). Whereas the additional human figure on the disc was an Assyrian artistic innovation (foreshadowed on the Broken Obelisk; fig. 54), the disc's position above a tree was common on Syrian cylinder seals. This is exemplified by seal impressions from Stratum VII in Alalakh, in which the disc was set on top of a pole adorned with floral elements, and it continued into Mitannian glyptics from the second half of the second millennium.[464] The combination of a winged disc with anthropomorphic properties was continued in ninth-century wall reliefs and on ninth–seventh-century seals, with one or three

461 Winter 1976, 46. For earlier depictions of the rosette in association with goddesses, see van Buren 1939, 84; Porada 1977. See also, for example, the rosettes that fill the non-decorated areas on the Megiddo ivory, probably alluding to Shaushka, who is depicted in the centre of the panel (Alexander 1991, 161); Teissier 1996, 98; Harper *et al.* 1995, 87, 90.

462 Cf. PKG, pls. 19, 22, 46, 235, 360; Black and Green 1992, 156; Moorey 1985, 173–174 (with bibliography).

463 Collon 2001, 80–83.

464 Collon 1975, 192.

human heads resting on the disc's wings (Chapter 4, § 4.1.2, figs. 76, 77, 108–111, 133, 134, 137, 204, 205).

However, modification in the renderings of the winged disc during its two centuries of presentation in Neo-Assyrian art sheds light on the Assyrian inclination to abstain gradually from the portrayal of human-shaped deities. As human-shaped components fused with the emblem disappeared over time from this pictorial representation, mainly during the seventh century, they were sometimes replaced by one or three circles, or leaving only a disc and wings.[465] Frankfort explained the disappearance of anthropomorphic features from the winged disc as reflecting a process of abstraction, in which a ring replaced the anthropomorphic portrayal of Ashur.[466] Nevertheless, it seems that the transformation of the winged disc from a semi-anthropomorphic emblem into a non-anthropomorphic one was the outcome of the general tendency in first-millennium imagery to underplay the anthropomorphic image of the deity, rather than due to a process of abstraction. Such abstraction would have contradicted the fundamental Mesopotamian precept that deities were anthropomorphic. This concept persisted, as noted, throughout the first millennium, and it was only the divine's pictorial image that was modified. The Assyrian tendency for symbolic renderings of the divine is exemplified, as postulated by Frankfort, in the Middle Assyrian period by the prominent role of the stylized tree in Assyrian art.

6.2.1.4. The Tree

A most popular non-anthropomorphic theme in Neo-Assyrian glyptics is the composition with a stylized tree. Collon distinguishes five main tree types in first-millennium Mesopotamian glyptics. Three of these types—the Ashurnasirpal tree, the arch-and-net tree and the palmette types—typify Assyrian glyptics, while the fourth type—the rosette tree—is apparent in Babylonian imagery of the late second millennium, reappearing in late eighth-century Babylonian

465 Cf. Collon 2001, nos. 154, 155–160, 165–169; Herbordt 1992, pl. 3:2, pl. 4:1,14, pl. 10:23–34.

466 According to Frankfort, "whatever the exact significance of such a detail, it symbolizes in a more abstract but decorative way what the projecting hands on the Broken Obelisk denote more realistically" (1939, 214).

workmanship, as well as in Assyrian glyptics. Whereas the Assyrian variants are usually depicted with a winged disc, Babylonian variants often omit this element (e.g. fig. 80).[467] The fifth tree type consists of several variants, some of which reached Assyrian glyptics through western inspiration. One of these is the stylized tree consisting of superimposed volutes and palmettes (fig. 204).[468] The most distinctive feature common to all variants of the Assyrian stylized tree is, as stated above, its association with the winged disc surmounting it.[469]

The tree rendered on cylinder and stamp seals may appear flanked by mortals, including royal figures (fig. 133), by animals, by demons standing erect (fig. 137) and by supernatural quadrupeds. The tree can be found as a solitary element, mainly on stamp seals.[470] Like the representations of the stylized tree on wall reliefs, it is not always clear whether the motif in glyptic renderings is apotropaic or should be seen as a divine symbol representing a specific deity. It could conceivably even allude to both functions. The relationship of the motif to other features displayed in the scene and its function in a given composition may, at times, clarify its role in a specific glyptic setting. Thus, when a figure of a gesturing worshipper is depicted before the tree, it should probably be regarded as a divine emblem (e.g., fig. 133, 204).[471] Similar compositions were also depicted on small finds other than seals, such as on a glazed vessel from Ashur depicting a worshipper before a palmette tree.[472] In other occasions, the stylized tree should be assumed to be a divine emblem on the basis

467 Collon 2001, nos. 177–181. See, however, Porada 1948, 726–731, 734.

468 Collon 2001, 85, and nos. 161, 362. Superimposed volutes and palmettes were common motifs depicted on Phoenician artifacts, such as ivories, metal bowls, and seals.

469 Collon 2001, 82–83, nos. 151–172, 184 (with bibliography); Herbordt 1992, pl. 3:1,2,13,16, pl. 12:1,2, pl. 13:1–4,7,8,17,18; Porada 1948, nos. 637, 640–645, 647–649.

470 Parker 1955, pl. XVI:4; Porada 1948, nos. 637–639, 640, 642–647; Jakob-Rost 1997, nos. 455–457; Hrouda 1962, pl. 28, 66; Buchanan and Moorey 1988, nos. 418, 419, 433, 434.

471 Cf. Parker 1955, pl. XVIII:1; 1962, 33 (ND. 6028), pl. XVI:1; Collon 2001, nos. 154–161, 168, 170; Herbordt 1992, pl. 13:12–14, 17; cf. Mallowan 1966 (II), 114–115, photo 58.

472 Andrae 1925, pl. 25.

of its comparability with recognized divine symbols depicted in identical compositions. For example, one may compare the role of the stylized tree on a stamped sealing from Nineveh with that of the spade and stylus shown in a similar layout on a sealing from Nimrud (e.g., cf. figs. 205, 206).

The glyptic representations of the tree flanked by mortals or demons, in particular the Ashurnasirpal-tree type, on seals dated to the ninth–eighth centuries, were inspired by the Assyrian monumental representations of a stylized tree (cf. the seal of Mushezib-Ninurta, fig. 133 with 108, 190, 191).[473] Illustrations of the stylized tree and of the winged disc in eighteenth-century Syrian glyptics support the assumption that this pictorial representation originated in northern Mesopotamia, Syria, or Anatolia, where it was sometimes associated with the storm god or with other deities.[474] Flanked by various figures, the theme was very familiar on cylinder seals dating from the second half of the second millennium, attested in Mitannian, Middle Assyrian, Kassite and Cypriote glyptics. The distinct composition of a tree with two demons standing at its sides, which was to become a predominant subject in first-millennium Assyrian art, appeared already in fourteenth-century Assyria, probably introduced by Mitannian prototypes.[475]

6.2.1.5. The Tree-and-Ibexes

The association of the Assyrian stylized tree topped by a winged disc with another tree-centered icon—a tree flanked by ibexes—is exemplified in fig. 207. This illustrates a seventh-century Assyrian cylinder seal, on which a worshipper gestures before an ibex, standing next to a tree topped by a winged disc.[476] This iconic group is to be regarded as a divine symbol, signified by the worshipper. The theme of horned animals, generally standing on their hind legs and nibbling the leaves of a tree, is an age-old motif, represented in Mesopotamian imagery since the mid-third millennium and continuing until Old

473 Collon 2001, 86–88, no. 51.

474 Lambert 1985, 440; Parpola 1993, 165, 168–169.

475 Russell 1998, 693–694.

476 Cf. Teissier 1984, no. 245.

Babylonian times.[477] The motif was depicted on Kassite cylinder seals and in late second-millennium Babylonian art, as exemplified by a feathered mitre on a *kudurru* of Marduk-nādin-aḫḫe (fig. 8).[478] Winged ibexes were shown next to a tree (or as opponents in combat scenes) on Neo-Babylonian cylinder seals and in ninth–sixth-century northwestern Iran. They continued into the Achaemenid period, as demonstrated by sealings impressed on the fifth-century tablets of the Bit Murashu archive at Nippur.[479]

The theme was not very common in first-millennium Assyrian glyptic art but appeared occasionally, as on glyptic items found at Nineveh and Nimrud.[480] While not very popular in Assyria itself, the motif was frequent in the western regions of the Assyrian Empire, suggesting that it reached Assyrian glyptics from the west during the eighth–sixth centuries.[481] The theme was also not common on Late Babylonian seals from before the Persian conquest,[482] a fact that supports its western origin. Accordingly, the motif is as yet not encountered in first-millennium monumental art from Assyria and

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477 The tree-and-ibex motif is quite common on objects from the Royal Cemetery at Ur (Woolley 1934, 91, 121–122, 264, 276–277, pls. 87–89, 96, 97, 100, 115). It is also apparent, although articulated somewhat differently, on an Early Dynastic II–III cosmetic container from Nippur, on a tablet from Fara (Shuruppak), on Old Babylonian terracottas and on a mural from Mari (Hansen 1998, 49, 60–62, nos. 6, 8; PKG, pls. 79a, 80; Barrelet 1968, no. 849; van Buren 1930, nos. 863–864; Opificius 1961, nos. 675–676; Parrot 1958, 27–28, fig. 23).

478 Wiseman 1959, no. 55; Buchanan 1966, no. 563; Delaporte 1923, pl. 87:5.

479 Porada 1947, 162. 1948, no. 746; Amiet 1973, 8–9, fig. 6. For Iranian examples, see Frankfort 1996, 342, fig. 402a; 345, fig. 707; Buchanan and Moorey 1988, no. 466; Jakob-Rost 1997, no. 481; Bregstein 1996.

480 Herbordt 1992, 245, no. 165, pl. 13:9; Parker 1955, pl. 12:1; 1962, pl. 18: 1. See also Porada 1948, nos. 638, 648; Collon 2001, nos. 238, 239,184, 188, 191 (Ur); von der Osten 1934, 66, no. 458; Eisen 1940, 54, nos. 98–99; Buchanan and Moorey 1988, nos. 264, 269.

481 Herbordt 1992, 108–109; Pritchard 1961, 20, fig. 46:322 (Giveon); also Keel 1997a, 784, fig. 10 (Abu al-Kharaz); Collon 2001, no. 161.

482 Porada 1948, 105, no. 840.

Babylonia, whereas it is recorded on Syrian wall reliefs from Tell Halaf, Karatepe and Til Barsip.[483]

The infrequency of the depiction of the tree with ibexes in Neo-Assyrian glyptics is somewhat surprising, since the motif was well known in both miniature and monumental Middle Assyrian art (e.g., fig. 209). It was rendered in wall paintings from Kar-Tukulti-Ninurta and on a schist vessel found near the Ashur temple at the same site. An elaborate composition, consisting of two pairs of horned animals with alternating coniferous and date trees, was incised on an ivory pyxis from tomb 45 at Ashur. Like the stylized tree, the tree-and-ibex icon was similarly introduced in Middle Assyrian imagery through Mitannian glyptics.[484]

The motif of ibexes flanking a tree is depicted on a fragmentary Old Akkadian limestone stela from Tell Halawa, on the middle Euphrates, now on the north-east bank of Lake Assad (fig. 210).[485] The location of this find and its early date, combined with the depiction of the theme among the Mari wall paintings and its frequent representations on Elaborate and Common Mitannian cylinder seals,[486] shed light on the popularity of this theme in northern Mesopotamia and Syria. The possibility that the theme originated in north Mesopotamia is supported by the depiction of two ibexes nibbling trees, flanking a male deity, on the Ashur Well Relief, discussed above (Chapter 1, § 1.4, fig. 36).

The image of an animal feeding on a tree reflects a familiar reality in all parts of the Near East and the Mediterranean basin until present times. The artistic articulation of this environmental phenomenon constitutes one of the most common visual subjects in ancient Near Eastern art, which belonged to an age-old stock of motifs. Hence, its exact meaning is difficult to ascertain, and may depend on its specific

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483 von Oppenheim 1933, 162, pl. 24a; Orthmann 1971, pls. 16: g, 53: b (with bibliography). For the renderings of the theme in Anatolia and Greece, cf. PKG, pl. 374; Beck 1982, 24–25; 1986, 32 (with bibliography).

484 Andrae 1925, 13–14, pl. 2; Smith 1965, 115, fig. 143; Nunn 1988, 97–98, 76; Haller 1954, 165–137, pl. 29; Harper *et al.* 1995, 63–64, 83–84; Matthews 1990, nos. 319–332; Parpola 1993, 163 (with bibliography).

485 Orthmann 1989, figs. 44, 47.

486 Parrot 1958, fig. 23; Salje 1990, *passim*; Porada 1948, no. 1030.

context. It is generally accepted that the motif was related to aspects of fertility and abundance, a suggestion corroborated by the appearance of this icon together with a suckling cow on the above-noted Tell Halawa stela. Its representations on the thighs of a nude goddess on Late Bronze clay plaques in Israel may further suggest that it sometimes also represented a female deity in charge of the above aspects.[487] However, as is often the case with ancient Near Eastern visual icons—in particular those with wide chronological and geographical distribution, they may have alluded to various deities, even of both genders. This is hinted at by the association between the tree-and-ibex motif and the male deity on the Ashur Well Relief. The longevity and wide distribution of the tree-and-ibex motif in ancient Near Eastern art permits us to interpret it as a polyvalent icon alluding to more than one single divinity, male or female, associated with various aspects of fecundity and prosperity.[488] It may, however, also serve as an isolated motif conveying similar aspects, serving as a benevolent and blessing amulet.

A link between a tree and an ibex in Assyrian glyptics is evident on a seventh-century Assyrian cylinder seal, with a stylized tree mounted on the back of an ibex, identified by its stance (fig. 208). The positioning of the tree on the back of an animal supports a divine identification for the tree, since usually only godly emblems or figures were mounted on animals in ancient Near Eastern imagery.[489] The composition further suggests that the ibex should be regarded here as the animal sacred to the divinity symbolized by the stylized tree. The addition of the winged disc above the stylized tree further highlights the difficulty in decoding the icon and identifying the deity or theme represented. Stein has identified the ibex on Mitannian cylinder seals as representing the sacred animal of Shaushka-Ishtar.[490] This may be

487 Beck 1994, 363, and n. 48; Keel 1998, 72–75, fig. 82.

488 Beck 1982, 14.

489 For probable exceptional portrayals of dead kings mounted on beasts depicted on Syro-Hittite sepulchre monuments, see Bonatz 2000, 204–206, figs. 15, 16.

490 Stein 1988, 177–178, fig. 11. For an ibex or a goat representing a goddess, cf. a tribute of a great image of a goat, mentioned in an Old Babylonian copy of a votive inscription of Šu-Sin (Frayne 1997, 313), which may be interpreted as a cultic object representing a deity, perhaps Ninlil. See, however, Wasserman

sustained by first-millennium glyptic connections between the star, emblem of Ishtar, and the ibex, signifying female deity, attested on seals from Ashur and Khorsabad.[491] However, as suggested by the existence of both the stylized tree and the winged disc on the seal illustrated in fig. 208, the ibex (or a wild goat) may have represented the god Ashur as well.[492]

The representation of the winged disc above both a stylized tree and a tree-with-ibexes when they appear as foci of cult demonstrates a process of divinization. This is not unlike the above-noted Late Babylonian phenomenon, in which motifs previously unknown as cult objects were thus signified in glyptic art by their conjunction with gesturing worshippers. This tendency further corroborates the symbolic nature of religious Assyrian imagery and its inclination to depart from divine anthropomorphic portrayals. It can be further sustained by a few additional cases in which an attribute was modified into a divine emblem, exemplified by representations of a scorpion and a griffin in Assyrian glyptic imagery.

6.2.1.6. The Scorpion

The age-old emblem of the scorpion was associated with fertility and was identified as a symbol of Išhara on three *kudurru*s of the Middle Babylonian period. Scorpions are shown alongside fertility symbols, such as a rosette, an ibex or a suckling animal (below, § 6.2.1.7), confirming their probable identification with Išhara and with other female deities, such as Inanna/Ishtar.[493] Representations of the scorpion were particularly common on first-millennium Assyrian artifacts connected to women. These include a decorated shell, which formed part of a woman's treasure trove, and highly luxurious gold, alabaster and electrum items, inscribed with the names of Atalia, consort of Sargon, and Tashmetum-sharrat, consort of Sennacherib

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2003, 17, who prefers to see this image as "symbol of their (the enemy's) defeat".

491 Loud and Altman 1938, pl. 58:110; Jakob-Rost 1997, nos. 361, 366, 367.

492 See above Chapter 1, §1.3, §1.4 and our figs. 33, 36; Klengel-Brandt 1980; Uehlinger 1993; Reade 2000, 108 (with bibliography); Collon 2001, 130, nos. 259, 260.

493 Seidl 1989, 156–157; Collon 1995b, 73–74; Marcus 1996, 131–132, no. 93.

from Nimrud. The scorpion is shown on clay bullae dated to Sennacherib from Nineveh and Ashur, depicting the king and his consort (fig. 132), or two female worshippers standing before a goddess mounted on a lion. These renderings may label the scorpion as a gender signifier pertaining to a specific worship performed by women.[494] However, it is the depiction of the scorpion on a clay bulla attributed to 716, found in the North-West Palace at Nimrud, which exemplifies the above-noted modification of the role of an icon from a divine attribute into a divine emblem. On this bulla the scorpion is shown as the focus of cult toward which a female worshipper gestures (fig. 203). Further evidence is provided by a unique depiction of a griffin as the focus of veneration, which appears on a provincial, seventh-century Assyro-Babylonian seal from Gezer, Israel (fig. 211 and above, Chapter 5, § 5.2.1.8).[495]

The Assyrian disposition for emblematic representations is further supported by renderings of adoration of symbolic groups, consisting of icons with several features—again, designated as divine by their conjunction with a gesturing adorant. The phenomenon is attested by various depictions of cultic veneration in front of a mythological combat scene (fig. 143), a "mistress of animals" (fig. 128), copulating animals (figs. 212, 213), and demons surmounted by a winged disc.[496]

6.2.1.7. The Suckling Cow

Another example of an age-old Near Eastern symbolic group whose role has been altered in Neo-Assyrian times can be illustrated by the development of the theme of the suckling cow. The depiction of a suckling animal, usually horned, its young shown between its legs, appears in the imagery of Mesopotamia, Iran, and Syria from the end of the fourth millennium onward. The running stance and the large antlers of the mature animal, pointing to its masculine gender, manifest a digression from reality and support the idea that this design was of emblematic value from its initial representations in the art of

494 Herbordt 1992, pl. 20: 5. Mallowan 1966, I, 112, 114 (n. 18), pl. 57. A. Kamil in Damerji 1999, 13. Klengel-Brandt 1994; Reade 1987; Ornan 2002, 470–471.

495 Macalister 1912, I, 293, fig. 154:14; Keel and Uehlinger 1998, 285, fig. 293a. For a similarly shaped seal, see von Luschan 1943, 74, pl. 15:o.

496 Cf. Parker 1955, 97–98 (ND.305), pl. 11:1.

the ancient Near East.[497] Depictions of a cow suckling its young, which probably convey a similar meaning as that of the suckling horned animal, are evident from the third millennium onward.[498]

A suckling animal on a late third-millennium wall painting found at the Middle Euphrates site of Tall as-Swēhat and the position of a suckling cow next to a tree-and-ibexes on the Old Akkadian Halawa stela (fig. 210)[499] reinforce our interpretation of the theme as a symbol of abundance. In contrast to the depictions of suckling horned animals, usually running, the suckling cow is generally portrayed standing, its head turned back to lick its calf, in a gesture that reflects the cow's habit of licking the rump of its young in order to encourage its appetite.

The suckling cow has generally been considered to belong to the Egyptian motifs, which entered Syrian art through Twelfth-Dynasty royal Egyptian artifacts found at Byblos.[500] However, in the Egyptian representations the cow suckles a human figure, a most unusual theme in ancient Near Eastern iconography. Although there are ancient literary metaphors associating goddesses with cows, these metaphors did not develop in ancient Near Eastern art into visual themes of human figures sucking milk from an animal's udder.[501] Moreover, Old Kingdom and Eleventh-Dynasty Egyptian murals depict the suckling animal in realistic contexts, such as hunting or animal husbandry,[502]

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497 Keel 1980b, 89–110.

498 Keel 1980b, figs. 61–63, 66, 69–70, 96.

499 Holland 1993–94, 280–281, fig. 107; Orthmann 1989, figs. 44, 47.

500 Barnett 1957, 13–14.

501 For textual allusions comparing Ishtar to a cow suckling the Assyrian king, see Parpola 1997, xxxvi, xxxviii–xxix with n. 165 (including references for Ugaritic textual evidence with bibliography). A unique intimate relation between a goddess and two human boys is conveyed on an Egyptianized bedstead ivory panel from Ugarit (Schaeffer 1954). The choice in an anthropomorphic portrayal of a frontal winged goddess suckling two boys, rather than a bovoid image suggests that the Egyptian prototype was modified here in order to make it more befitting for the eye of the Ugaritic beholder (and see Gachet-Bizollon 2001, 28–36).

502 Keel 1980b, 75–76, figs. 24, 26–27, 32–33, 37; Winter 1981a, 107 (with bibliography). Despite the general realistic rendering of the Egyptian suckling-

whereas western Asiatic representations, from the late fourth millennium onward, showed the suckling animal as an isolated motif possessing symbolic value. The appearance of a suckling animal as an isolated symbolic group without royal association as early as the late fourth millennium in western Asiatic imagery stresses its benevolent symbolic nature rather than its regal symbolism.[503] The divergence of this icon from Egyptian representations suggests that the Syrian, Mesopotamian and Iranian depictions of the suckling cow are to be traced to western Asia and not to Egypt. On Old Babylonian cylinder seals, the suckling animal, believed to allude to Ninhursag or Ishtar, was usually represented as a secondary element.[504] Only in Middle Assyrian glyptics was the animal placed in the centre of the scene, being almost the only feature in it.[505] At times the suckling beast is accompanied by a rosette (e.g., fig. 171); which corroborates the aspects of fecundity conveyed by this symbolic group.

The association of the motif with icons alluding to fertility is well demonstrated in first-millennium representations, in which it often appears together with a rosette and star, as exemplified on the stamp seal illustrated in fig. 214. Its benevolent and blessing character are confirmed by its appearance in conjunction with astral symbols.[506] The popularity of the motif in first-millennium imagery is attested by its representation on contemporary ivories.[507] A rise in the role of the theme of the suckling cow is manifested by its depiction on a wall relief of Sargon at Khorsabad, in which a statue of a suckling cow is shown in front of the Urartian temple of Musasir.[508] This rendering may suggest that this symbolic group represents an apotropaic figure,

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cow scenes, the weeping cow (cf. Keel 1980b, fig. 6) may testify to additive meaning lacking in Near Eastern iconography.

503 Van Buren 1945, 87; Keel 1980b, figs. 51–56; contra Parpola 1997, xxxvi–xliv.

504 Keel 1980b, 100–108 (with bibliography).

505 Keel 1980b, 114–115. The design also appeared on Middle Minoan III artifacts. Since a suckling cow was already shown on an impression dated to Hammurabi's grandfather, Apil-Sin (Porada 1950, 157, fig. 1), Syrian borrowing from the Aegean is hardly convincing.

506 E.g., Keel 1980b, 127, figs. 107–110 (also fig. 80); Porada 1989, 381–382, fig. 23.2.

507 Herrmann 1992, 38, 114–115; Winter 1981a, 106–108.

508 Keel 1980b, 120, fig. 100 (with bibliography).

a mount animal, or an object of worship in its own right. Indeed, a suckling cow approached by a gesturing worshipper, rendered on a few seventh-century cylinder seals, sustains the understanding of this icon as representing a venerated deity as well (fig. 215).[509]

That the suckling cow became a sacred beast of anthropomorphic deities is attested on two ninth–eighth-century cylinder seals, on which the animal appears as the mount of a goddess as well as that of a male storm god, identified by his lightning bolts (figs. 216, 217). The use of a suckling animal as a mount for both male and female deities coincides with the appearance of other fecundity and affluence emblems—such as the tree-and-ibexes—alongside gods and goddesses. It would seem that a motif's meaning—fecundity in the case of a suckling animal, or authority and protection in the case of a winged disc—was adapted to fit different aspects of various deities; thus, the same emblem came to signify different deities.[510]

The transformation of the suckling animal from a benevolent icon associated with fecundity into a divine mount and an object of worship is in accordance with other cases attesting to the Assyrian tendency towards symbolization. This is also manifested in a few Assyrian glyptic renderings, noted above, in which the suckling cow is shown in copulating scenes (figs. 212, 213). Like the above-noted Late Babylonian glyptic examples (Chapter 5, § 5.2.1.4–8, figs. 163, 164, 166–169) and their Neo-Assyrian parallels (figs. 207, 211–213), the divine nature of the suckling cow is corroborated by the figure of the worshipper, who is shown gesturing, facing this symbolic group.

6.2.1.8. The Crescent-on-a-Pole

In first-millennium lunar glyptic imagery the moon god was portrayed in three manners: 1) anthropomorphically, as a bearded male figure standing upright within a crescent (see above, figs. 71–77); 2) as a celestial symbol in the upper part of a scene, identified as the emblem of Sin on the Sippar Tablet (fig. 65);[511] and 3) as a crescent mounted on a pole, representing Sin of Harran. The third version, often employed as a cult object in Assyrian glyptic art (figs. 196, 197),

509 Collon 2001, nos. 218, 219.

510 Ornan 2001b; forthcoming (b).

511 Seidl 1989, 98.

serves as an example for illustrating popular symbol worship typical of the glyptic art of Assyria and its provinces. As noted above, the identification of the emblem as representing Sin of Harran is confirmed by the Aramaic dedication to the Lord of Harran inscribed on the stela of Barrakib from Zinjirli (fig. 183), sustained by Assyrian royal stelae found in Harran and its vicinity. These monuments, coupled with small artifacts, shed light on both the official and popular aspects of the cult of Sin of Harran.[512]

The crescent-on-a-pole is usually either shown in the centre of a seal's scene, flanking another motif, or as a sole motif, mainly on stamp seals.[513] In these representations, the pole may rest on the ground or on a square or mountain-like pedestal. The emblem appears in Neo-Assyrian cylinder seals from the end of the ninth or the beginning of the eighth century, as exemplified on an impression of Bēl-tarṣi-iluma, eponym of Nimrud in 797, where it is displayed with neither pedestal nor pendant (fig. 218). As a subject of worship, the emblem appears on the above-noted mid-eighth century glyptic finds from Khorsabad and Nineveh, for instance (figs. 196, 197), at times flanked by two human-headed *apkallu*s (fig. 219).[514]

Although a crescent positioned on a pole is usually considered to be a northern Mesopotamian or Syrian emblem of the moon god, it was also familiar on Old Babylonian chariot models and on seal impressions from Failaka in the northern Persian Gulf.[515] It would seem, therefore, that like simple crescents, crescents-on-a-pole are also age-old religious icons distributed throughout the ancient Near East. The emblem was apparently known in the region of Harran in

512 Keel 1994, 148.

513 E.g., stamp seals from Ashur: Jakob-Rost 1997, nos. 413, 416–422; stamp sealings from Nimrud and Nineveh: Herbordt 1992, pls. 4:8, 10:14,15,22; a cylinder seal from Nimrud: Collon 2001, no. 221; and a stamp seal from Ashur: Haller 1954, p. 19:g.

514 Herbordt 1992, pls. 1:1, 4:3–6; see also Porada 1948, nos. 706, 710–712; Teissier 1984, nos. 248–252; Collon 2001, nos. 168, 227, 228.

515 The emblem was also known in Mitannian glyptics, Keel 1994, 165–167; Buchanan and Moorey 1988, 54. For Old Babylonian clay plaques depicting the motif and placed within boats, see Porada 1975, 168, 166; Khazai 1983, 105, no. 112. For third-millennium renderings of crescents-on-a-pole, see Keel 1994, 166–167.

northern Syria during the second millennium. It became more common at the end of the second millennium, reaching its peak with Assyrian expansion westward, particularly from the second half of the eighth century onwards. Due to the close relationship between seventh-century Assyrian and Babylonian glyptic art, some crescents-on-a-pole are also found in Babylonia, mainly on stamp seals.[516]

Pedestal-base and dangling pendants on both sides of the crescents-on-a-pole characterize many of the first-millennium representations of the emblem. Similar pendants alongside emblems appeared in earlier seal impressions from Nuzi,[517] as well as on a Middle Assyrian pedestal from Ashur (fig. 52). On the basis of the details of the emblem, its pedestal and its attached pendants, scholars have differentiated two sub-groups of the emblem: an eastern group, typical of Assyria, and a western group, common in Syria and in Cis- and Transjordan. Seals belonging to the first group bear the following characteristic: drop-like designs flanking the crescent and hanging over the horizontal line across the pole, rake-like rectangular pedestals (either on a terraced base or without a base), the positioning of the emblem next to a branch-like tree, or else centred and flanked by identical figures (as shown on the stelae in figs. 184, 185; but cf. fig. 218). Seals from the western group have the following characteristics: pairs of parallel lines, generally hanging from the crescent itself or from its joint to the pole, a rectangular pedestal with two small feet, adorned with diagonal lines or a checkered pattern, a cypress-like tree, with an oval and pointed top, or a single worshipper next to the emblem.[518] Quite a large number of scaraboid stamp seals found at Mesopotamian sites were engraved with a crescent-on-a-pole. The shape of these seals and the sintered quartz of which many were made may point to a provenance in the western part of the Assyrian Empire. Some of the crescents-on-a-pole belonging to the western sub-group

516 E.g., Jakob-Rost 1997, nos. 260, 414, 415 ; see also Collon 2001, no. 222 (a cylinder seal from Ur).

517 Keel 1994, 138; Porada 1975, 169.

518 Spycket 1974; Keel 1977, 284–285, 311, figs. 211a–214; 1994, 151–152 (for a third group combining elements from the two groups). See, however, Buchanan and Moorey 1988, 54, for reservations about the division into regional groups. For a "western"-type seal found at Ashur, see Haller 1954, pl. 19:g.

have other western traits, such as the Egyptian uraeus[519] or worshippers playing musical instruments, exemplified by prism-shaped seals engraved on four walls and base (e.g., fig. 220).[520] Prism-shaped seals, combining the forms of cylinder, stamp and cubic seals, became common in the eighth–seventh centuries in Syria and the Levant, where the manufacture of stamp seals had never ceased.[521] The four rectangular faces of these seals form a visual sequence evoking the imagery of cylinder seals. Although the crescent-on-a-pole was widely distributed in Syria, its connection with the Aramaic-speaking population is somewhat problematic[522] since only a relatively small number of seals inscribed with West-Semitic inscriptions, including Aramaic, bear the emblem.[523] This would seem to contradict the commonly-held conjecture that the crescent-on-a-pole, symbol of Sin of Harran, is typical of the Arameans.[524]

The frequent depictions of the emblem flanked by trees on seals of both groups is sometimes perceived as reflecting cultic ceremonies held in a wood.[525] Although cultic activities were probably held in open spaces between trees, as indicated by gardens planted for ritual practice on temple grounds and as mirrored in biblical accounts,[526] this suggestion needs more solid proof. Notwithstanding this, the reconstruction of the façade of the temple of Sin at Khorsabad with flanking trees may suggest that the crescent-on-a-pole in these

519 Cf. a cylinder seal from Nimrud, Collon 2001, no. 220 (with more cited examples); Keel and Uehlinger 1998, fig. 295b (Tell el-Jemmeh, Israel).

520 Keel 1994, 153.

521 A link between these seals and contemporaneous bell-shaped stamp-cylinder Urartian seals, flaring out towards their bottom and engraved on their base, should not be ruled out, cf. Collon 1987, 86, nos. 399–404. On the Syrian origin of cubic seals, see Culican 1977.

522 Cf. Lipiński 1994, 187.

523 For Aramaean cylinder and stamp seals adorned with the emblem, see Keel 1994, 155, 171–172; and Avigad and Sass 1997, nos. 836, 845, 1083. A unique inscribed Hebrew seal bearing the emblem is a non-provenanced stamp seal of *bʿny ʿdyhw* (Ornan 1997, no. 197).

524 Spycket 1973; 1974; Herbordt 1992, 83; Keel 1994, 139–141, 199–202, figs. 1, 3, 7.

525 Weippert 1978, 50–51; Spycket 1973.

526 Wiseman 1983, 143–144.

renderings represents a façade of a shrine, in which the cult object is shown.[527] This does not imply, however, that the scene did not also symbolize a celestial gate with rising moon, as even when a seal illustrates a cultic reality, it also held a symbolic meaning. Keel interprets the crescent in such depictions—as well as in other, treeless, scenes—as alluding to the birth of a new moon. This not only represented the triumph of light over darkness, but also the rejuvenation of all life and vegetation that stood for fecundity and hope. Therefore, it is not surprising to find contemporary glyptic representations connecting a crescent pole with trees and animals, thus stressing the potential meaning of affluence and fertility conveyed in the representations of crescents-on-a-pole.[528]

The crescent-on-a-pole represents a divine symbol, which was common at Harran and from there became widely distributed throughout the Assyrian Empire. The seals bearing the emblem represent a cult that was adopted and stimulated by Assyrian administration.[529] The popular display of the crescent-on-a-pole in various regions of the Near East in general, and in territories under Assyrian control in particular was, on the one hand, part of the broader tendency to reject human-shaped deities from pictorial renderings and, at the same time, probably contributed to the supremacy of the divine symbol over the image of the human-shaped god.[530]

527 Keel 1977, 296. Barrelet 1950, 25–33.

528 E.g., a rectangular stamp seal depicted with a crescent-on-a-pole on one side and a cow and its young on its other side: Parker 1955, 108 (ND 772) pl. 18:5.

529 Holloway 1995.

530 Keel 1977, 296–303; 1994, 151, 178.

CHAPTER SEVEN

CONCLUSIONS

THE AVOIDANCE OF ANTHROPOMORPHIC PORTRAYAL OF DEITIES IN MESOPOTAMIA AND THE BIBLICAL IMAGE BAN

Like other worshippers throughout the ancient Near East the early inhabitants of Mesopotamia conceived of their deities in anthropomorphic form. It seems that human imagination is somewhat limited and that even when men and women wished to allude to the supernatural they could not transcend their realistic surroundings. Such a limitation is alluded to in the words of the sixth-century pre-Socratic Greek philosopher, Xenophanes, who speculated that if horses had gods they would probably have a horse's form.[531] Mesopotamia's unequivocal approach—demonstrated throughout its history in written evidence—conceptualizing the divine as having a human form was manifested in pictorial renderings. In order to differentiate between divinities and mortals the divinities, which were conceived as bigger than human beings, were regularly signified by horned headdresses. At the same time, divinities were also rendered in a non-anthropomorphic form in Mesopotamia since very early times. This contrast between the cognitive perception of the divine and its articulation in visual renderings hints at a fundamental intricacy of Mesopotamian thinking. The absence of recognized anthropomorphic pictorial renderings of the two supreme Mesopotamian gods, Anu and Enlil, may, indeed, reflect the difficulty in visually concretizing the human-shaped image of the divine.

Perusal of earlier Mesopotamian finds reveals that the tradition of emblematic representation of deities was known, and even predominant, in some of the periods before it reached its peak during the first millennium. This tendency is deeply rooted in the pictorial history of Mesopotamia and has never been entirely absent from its imagery throughout the ages. Such an inclination is to be associated

531 Versnel 2000, 92, with n. 32 for detailed bibliography.

with a broader trend in the ancient Near East to transfer the sacredness of deities to symbols and objects.[532]

Inanimate objects, animals, composite creatures, stylized natural phenomena and floral motifs that symbolized divine entities were part of Mesopotamian imagery from at least the later part of the fourth millennium. These were shown as an object, either carried by a god or goddess, and functioned mainly as an identifying signifier. Most intriguing are depictions in which the symbol is rendered on its own, without a humanlike deity and, in particular instances in which the emblem is shown with a gesturing worshipper, clearly indicating that it was considered a cult object representing the deity. Following Seidl, an object carried by a deity can be defined as an attribute, while that depicted without a divine figure is to be regarded as a symbol,[533] which often replaces the human-shaped deity.

This emblematic trait of Mesopotamian religious imagery is documented from at least as early as the Late Uruk period, in the second half of the fourth millennium, well exemplified by the representation of the female deity, probably Inanna, by a looped door-post alluding to her temple, as well as by her anthropomorphic depiction, as shown on the Uruk Vase.[534] The lion-headed eagle Anzu, symbolizing Ningirsu on Early Dynastic artifacts, further exemplifies the representation of the divine by non-anthropomorphic emblems. In addition, although divine figures are commonly shown in two-dimensional compositions and one may speculate that three-dimensional divine statuary from these early days did not survive, nonetheless, the earliest large sculptures at our disposal depicting human forms from the Uruk period represent the figure of the mortal ruler and not that of the divine.[535] This corresponds to Spycket's suggestion that statues of human-shaped deities were not referred to in texts during most of the third millennium and that sculptures of gods and goddesses were preceded by emblems and appeared only at the

532 Cf. van der Toorn 1997b, 1–14.

533 Seidl 1989, 120, 121, 125. Compare the crescent moon and the image of anthropomorphic Nanna/Sin in imagery of the late third and early second millennia (Colbow 1997b, 23–24).

534 Schmandt-Besserat 1993.

535 Spycket 1981, 29–30; Moortgat 1969, 8–9, pls. 6–10, 13.

close of the third millennium.[536] Representations of major deities in human form before the late third millennium were usually confined to two-dimensional renderings; free-standing divine portrayals were usually small and hardly to be considered as the focus of cultic worship. The development of the cultic image in Mesopotamia was long and complex. It began with statues of deceased kings, continuing with statues of living kings, and culminating, not earlier than the end of the third millennium, in divine statues and figurines.[537] The precedence of sculptures representing mortals and not deities may support the above notion regarding the intrinsic difficulty of Mesopotamian imagery to render the divine visually in his or her human form. For this reason, the inclination to avoid divine anthropomorphic depictions should not be viewed as foreign or deviant, in spite of the obvious, constant Mesopotamian precept which views the godly image as a human. Thus, side by side with the plethora of anthropomorphic renderings of divinities in Babylonia attested until the fourteenth century, representations of divine emblems as cult objects are exemplified in glyptic art of Neo-Sumerian and Old Babylonian times by the crescent moon standard, which served as the focus of veneration.[538] Other divine symbols frequent in Old Babylonian glyptic imagery are the lightning bolt and the bull associated with Adad, the storm god, and the curved staff linked to the god Amurru.

Although non-anthropomorphic display was known in Mesopotamian iconography during the third millennium and continued in the first half of the second millennium, it was only during the second half of the second millennium and in particular during the first millennium that non-anthropomorphic depictions of the divine

536 Spycket 1968; 1981, 54, 37 (for the inscribed ^{d}Abu sculpture from the Sin temple at Tell Asmar); 144–146, pl. 96 (for what is probably the earliest securely-identified large cult sculpture in the round: the Akkadian-style stone statue of enthroned Inanna/Narundi found at Susa), 185–187, 204; cf. Winter 1984, 105–107 (for the ^{d}Abu sculpture and enthroned female images from Mari); for a different interpretation of the ^{d}Abu sculpture, see Jacobsen 1989 (with earlier bibliography).

537 Spycket 1968, 9-10; Hallo 1983, 7; 1988, 57–60.

538 Ornan 2001b, 9–11; Colbow 1997b, 22–24.

became common, often suppressing anthropomorphic representations. This tendency is most evident on stone *kudurru* monuments of Kassite Babylonia, dating from the fourteenth century onward, and is corroborated by other media in contemporary Babylonia. An inclination of a certain culture towards non-anthropomorphism is implied even when such representations were few in number but not entirely absent. Accordingly, although only a handful of deities were represented by emblems on Kassite seals, these renderings match contemporary *kudurru*s and stress the overall non-anthropomorphic affinities of Kassite art in general. This tendency is also observed in Assyria from the thirteenth century onward, where it may have infiltrated as a result of Babylonian influence.

As described in Chapters 3–6, during the first half of the first millennium anthropomorphic representation of deities was largely eschewed in Assyrian and Babylonian art and the replacement of these figures with inanimate symbols, animals, or fantastic creatures reached its peak. Avoidance of anthropomorphic deities is most common in Babylonian artifacts. These include many of the ninth–eighth-century cylinder seals, first-millennium *kudurru*s, which continue second-millennium imagery, the rather few traces of Babylonian monuments, and especially seventh–fifth-century cylinder and stamp seals. In our effort to delineate the non-anthropomorphic nature of first-millennium Babylonia, unique finds should not be dismissed, since they provide a link to other examples attesting to that general trend. For example, it is not only the position of the sun disc on Nabu-apla-iddina's Sippar Tablet that suggests non-anthropomorphic inclinations. It is the placement of the Sippar Tablet within the general context of symbolism marking Neo- and Late Babylonian glyptics and dominating *kudurru*s that deems it yet another example of the removal of human-form images of deities from Babylonian art. Notwithstanding all this, the very existence of a few anthropomorphic portrayals of deities in first-millennium Babylonian imagery reconfirms that the divine was conceived as bearing a human form, in continuation of age-old Mesopotamian perceptions. Whereas most of these godly images were associated with temples and apparently were confined only to temple paraphernalia kept within the sacred enclosure, non-anthropomorphic representations were most prevalent elsewhere, beyond the sacred space.

The first-millennium inclination in Mesopotamia for the symbolic representation of deities is evident on Assyrian stelae and rock reliefs. Most of these portray the king as a worshipper gesturing toward deities, the latter represented by symbols. The tendency to depart from divine anthropomorphic images is well attested in palace decoration, which, as a rule, did not include large-scale major gods or goddesses, but only depictions of minor deities of an apotropaic nature. Moreover, even when a few prominent deities are shown on Assyrian palace reliefs they are rendered in a very small scale: they are not represented for their own merit, but as protective images applied to various military accessories. The inclination to avoid representations of prominent gods and goddesses is also evident on Assyrian cylinder seals, of which only one group—admittedly a very large one, dated to the ninth–eighth centuries—clung to an age-old Mesopotamian motif of the encounter between a worshipper and a human-shaped god. The fact that the devotional scenes shown on the seals of this group, often portraying court officials, were accompanied with many divine symbols further enhances the growing role of divine emblems. This is corroborated by seventh-century glyptic finds, in which anthropomorphic divine portrayals gradually declined in frequency.

An exceptional approach of Assyrian monumental art with regard to the above inclination is revealed on rock reliefs, stelae and few small artifacts, dating from Sennacherib's reign, on which human-shaped deities are depicted. These portrayals, however, did not inspire Sennacherib's palatial decoration, which maintained the general Neo-Assyrian reluctance to portray prominent deities in human form. The preference for anthropomorphic portrayal of deities during the reign of Sennacherib is to be considered in the context of broader iconographical innovations and in particular in the context of modifications in religious imagery initiated under this king. However, whereas many of these artistic innovations were adopted from Babylonian iconography, the representation of deities in human form was inspired by Syrian imagery, in which such an anthropomorphic portrayal was rather common.

Abstention from anthropomorphic portrayal of deities in Assyrian art, which continued Middle Assyrian tendencies, bore additional political implications, clearly manifested from the ninth century onward. The exclusion of major deities from Assyrian palace reliefs,

on the one hand, and the emphasis upon the royal figure, on the other hand, strengthens the general message conveyed in royal Assyrian imagery of the king as the supreme protagonist. Retaining the portrayal of the king as the sole major figure in palatial decoration as well as on stelae and rock reliefs eliminated the possible competition between king and god for the eye of the beholder, and resulted in the exaltation of the monarch. Earthly political needs thus seem to subvert religious ones in Assyrian royal monumental art.

Most men or women, therefore, rarely saw the anthropomorphic images of their deities in ninth–sixth-century Assyria and Babylonia. In their daily lives, Babylonians and Assyrians were not surrounded by figures of their prominent gods, but instead by clay statuettes of minor deities, by composite apotropaic creatures and by divine symbols engraved on seals. The ancients saw their prominent human-shaped gods on special occasions, such as cultic processions, but as a rule, cult statues in Mesopotamia were kept closed in shrines and temples,[539] into which ordinary people could not have entered.

The role of the emblem in Mesopotamian art has been treated by several scholars. The precursor of non-anthropomorphic godly portrayals in the later fourth and early third millennia has been noted by Jacobsen, who interpreted their late-third-millennium suppression in favour of human-shaped deities as the ultimate supremacy of the anthropomorphic form over the non-anthropomorphic icon.[540] In light of the above survey, however, it seems that the divine human-shaped pictorial metaphor had never fully triumphed in Mesopotamian art.[541] Moreover, it was neglected in favour of its non-anthropomorphic counterpart at least from the second half of the second millennium.

Lambert has suggested that the use of divine emblems in Mesopotamian imagery may have derived from the need to differentiate between gods and mortals and that the ancient Mesopotamian artisan found it easier to render symbols than anthropomorphic figures.[542] These suggestions face some difficulties. First, if symbols were indeed selected in order to differentiate between

539 Lambert 1990, 122.
540 Jacobsen 1970, 16–18.
541 Ornan 1995, 49.
542 Lambert 1990, 123–124.

gods and mortals, why was symbolic representation favoured in certain periods, while anthropomorphic rendering was preferred in others? Second, it is unlikely that symbolic representation was chosen for its technical simplicity. After all, although divine figures were almost totally omitted, worshippers were always shown in their human form, most often in a highly elaborate rendering. The same holds true for the choice of symbolic representation on *kudurru*s, some of which were carved with great skill and in great detail. Moreover, the large portrayals of the king and his official on first-millennium *kudurru*s highlight the fact that the replacement of anthropomorphic renderings of the divine with emblems did not stem from technical motivations. Instead, it reflects a deeper religious and cultural propensity to remove divine anthropomorphism from visual renderings.

A probable explanation for the dearth of divine figures in Mesopotamian imagery from around the fourteenth to the sixth century is implied by Lambert. He sheds light on the supreme holiness of the divine image[543] embodied within the sacred cult statue and suggests that cult statues were usually kept only within the limits of the temple. Thus, when "removed" from their sacred surroundings—for example, depicted on a cylinder seal, shown on a palace wall relief, or rendered on a stone stela in a remote location—the divine image was replaced by its surrogate, a non-anthropomorphic symbol. This modification was probably aimed at reserving the sacredness of the divine image exclusively for its terrestrial abode, the human-built temple.

The elimination of the human figure of the divine was reexamined by Mettinger in a thorough study published in 1995, focusing on the development of the image ban of the Israelites, demonstrating that the Israelite negation of anthropomorphic worship was rooted in the West Semitic realm. While acknowledging the replacement of divine figures by their emblems in Mesopotamian iconography, Mettinger views it as the outcome of "extraordinary situations" and of mere circumstance, which did not bear any broader implication, such as an association with the biblical prohibition against the visual portrayal of

543 Lambert 1990, 123–124.

God.[544] In dealing with the aniconic nature of ancient Israelite religion and its connection with similar phenomena in the ancient Near East and its satellite cultures, such as the Phoenician to the west, Mettinger expands the definition of the term "aniconic" to include all cultures in which no iconic—e.g. figurative—representations of the main god of a cult exist. According to Mettinger, aniconic worship in the West Semitic world focused on standing stones, or on a composition termed "empty space," entailing a visual representation of an object used by the divine, most commonly a throne or an empty shrine, but not the image of the deity itself. Following Gerhardsson, he distinguishes between *de facto* aniconic and programmatic aniconic traditions. The former category includes traditions that tolerate reverence of images although they lack such representations and those that worship both idols and non-anthropomorphic substitutions. The latter category, in contrast, totally rejected idolatry. Programmatic aniconic traditions, as textually expressed by the biblical approach in later Judaism and Islamic perceptions, exhibited iconophobia and iconoclasm in their destructive aggression towards any visual anthropomorphic depiction.[545]

Like other related phenomena, Assyro-Babylonian abstention from divine pictorial anthropomorphism did not evolve into a programmatic stage; hence, it matches the definition of *de facto* aniconic traditions and should not be viewed as foreign to or atypical of Mesopotamian imagery, as suggested by Mettinger. Moreover, divine Mesopotamian imagery clearly conveyed a tolerance toward anthropomorphic representations, as evident, for example, in the divine imagery typical of Assyria during the reign of Sennacherib. In his rejection of the aniconic nature of Mesopotamian phenomena, Mettinger correctly points out that the Mesopotamian deity was basically perceived as an anthropomorphic being. However, since this observation holds true for

544 Mettinger 1995, 23, 39–48 (especially 47), 55–56. In this he seems to follow scholars who emphasize the differences between biblical concepts and those prevailing in Assyria and Babylonia. These are generally based on biblical references such as Deut. 4:28 or Isa. 44:16–19 (see below), which contain a scathing approach toward the adoration of divine statues, cf. Berlejung 1998, 371–409.

545 Mettinger 1995, 18–20, 100–103, 113, and *passim*.

all West Semitic cultures—including ancient Israel, whose ritual was, indeed, aniconic—this argument is irrelevant to the definition of aniconic depictions. After all, as proposed by Mettinger, aniconic representations do not necessarily preclude iconic religion or theology.[546] It should be stressed that the issue at hand is not how ancient devotees imagined their god in their minds, but how this god was actually depicted in visual representations. In accordance with Mettinger's typology, aniconic Mesopotamian representations should be assigned to the class of material aniconism manifested as non-anthropomorphic symbolism. In other words, the group of aniconic visual representations, which consists of West Semitic stelae and "empty space" worship, should be expanded to include East Semitic, Mesopotamian compositions of emblem worship. The examination of divine imagery offered here has shown that the aniconic tradition in Mesopotamia assumed the form of representing deities by means of emblems: inanimate objects, plants, animals, or hybrids. It has further demonstrated that this abstention from divine anthropomorphic portrayals accords well with other visual tendencies in the ancient Near East during the first millennium. The common denominator of these artistic approaches is the removal of human-shaped deities from pictorial descriptions despite the fact that these gods and goddesses were conceptualized in human form in their believers' minds.

The dearth of ancient Mesopotamian written sources relating to this issue probably hinders our ability to understand the reasons for replacing anthropomorphic deities with their emblems. A possibility that abstention from anthropomorphic portrayal of deities may have been an outcome of a deliberate policy of the priesthood to remove the "true" human-shaped images of deities from their worshippers in order to elevate divine status may pose an attractive motive but as yet lacks any confirmation. It seems more probable that because divine statues were regarded most holy and were not always accessible when divine presence was needed, emblems were used in their stead, as indicated by the inscription on the Sippar Tablet. Mesopotamian texts also attest that divine symbols occasionally served as cult objects, before which oaths were sometimes taken.[547] As a rule, however,

546 Mettinger 1995, 22; Hallo 1983, 2.

547 Lambert 1990, 123–124; Holloway 2001, 253–255, 261–265.

ancient Mesopotamian written sources are not only silent with regard to the role of divine emblems, but most often imply that the divine was given a human form. Indeed, they offer numerous references to anthropomorphic deities, as well as to existing divine statues in human form.[548]

One is therefore inclined to conclude that Mesopotamian textual and pictorial evidence reveal a certain disagreement with regard to the manner in which deities were conceived and visually articulated. This contradiction should not come as a surprise. Although contemporary imagery and written sources of any society in any period of time are the products of their cultural environment and often reveal similar needs and aims, they may, nonetheless, reflect different approaches. Central symbols that represented basic world views were not always mentioned in the written sources, but were, nevertheless, depicted visually.

An example of such a discrepancy in first-millennium Mesopotamia is illustrated by ninth-century Assyrian palace reliefs of Ashurnasirpal II, which most frequently depicted the king and *apkallu*s beside a stylized tree and were engraved with the Standard Inscription reporting the king's achievements, accompanied by his various epithets. The absence of any allusions to the stylized tree in these inscriptions not only renders the decipherment of these scenes somewhat disputable,[549] but also confirms the frequently non-parallel nature of written and visual evidence. As literacy in the ancient world was only available to a privileged few, visual depictions conveying ideological messages—not necessarily expressed in writings—had great impact. There were occasions on which media other than the written word were preferred, as, for example, when conveying a message that may have evoked opposition, or when transmitting an accepted conduct, not yet visually formulated.[550] As pictorial and written evidence were not always coordinated, the visual version at times served as an "independent" source. Such was probably the case with the Mesopotamian pictorial abstention from anthropomorphic

548 Hallo 1983, 9–14 (with bibliography); Lambert 1990, 122–123.

549 Parpola 1993, 165, 168–169; Porter 1993b, 137 and n. 20.

550 Marcus 1995, 2505.

deities, which is to be regarded as an accepted cultic conduct which was not articulated textually.

One may only speculate that it was the sacredness of the divine figures that motivated the avoidance of rendering them in visual form. The possibility that it was, indeed, the awesome sacred status of Mesopotamian deities, or perhaps their splendour, that prevented them from being viewed by humans may be inferred from the highest position of Enlil among other Sumerian gods, expressed in a Sumerian poem that recounts that "no god could look upon him".[551] Such a relationship between a lofty one and his inferiors—even though all are supernatural beings in this case—may shed light on the dynamics that led to the removal of human-shaped deities from pictorial renderings. As mentioned, the worship of anthropomorphic deities prevailed in Babylonian and Assyrian temples, yet in pictorial depictions the human-shaped deity was most often represented by a non-anthropomorphic symbol. This divergence of an artistic rendering from the (cultic) reality to which it refers was the result of a cognitive process governed by an ideological perception. It was not the cult image itself that was removed, but rather the anthropomorphic visual metaphor of the divine that was transformed when rendered beyond the context of the shrine.

The removal of the Mesopotamian human-shaped deity from pictorial renderings resembles the biblical approach not only in its challenging the portrayal of a divine image, but also in the duality embedded in this challenge. Mesopotamian imagery diverges from its own rich written sources, just as biblical accounts and references contradict the Bible's cultic perception of the divine. Both in the Bible and in the Babylonian-Assyrian approach the divine is conceived as having a human form, yet in both cases this anthropomorphism was either concealed or rejected, albeit in different degrees.

In contrast to the gods of other nations, the Israelite god, according to the Bible, was not worshipped through a cult image, as his articulation in visual form was forbidden. This cultic practice, together with the concept of monotheism and the idea of concentration of cult, became the three principles governing the Bible's primary ideological

551 Black *et al.* 1998–, Enlil in the E-kur (Enlil A), l. 103; Black and Green 1992, 76.

message. However, with regard to the prohibition against depicting the divine figure, the Bible, while replete with anthropomorphism, nowhere denies the human shape of the divine, but only forbids the rendering of its image. The anthropomorphism of God is indeed manifested in various biblical attestations.[552] It is evident not only in Gen. 1:26–27, which states that man was made in the likeness of God, but also in the accounts of Exod. 24:9–11, 33:20 and 22–23, where it is clear that God has a human face, hand, back, or feet, which only the privileged could see. Even in other references to epiphany (e.g., Deut. 4:12, which serves, according to some scholars, a motivation for the injunction against making idols), the biblical narrator does not deny God's human form, but only states that the people of Israel "saw no figure, there was only a voice".[553] The numerous other references to the human appearance and behaviour of the divine in the Bible (e.g. Num. 12:8) testify further to the fact that the biblical God was conceived as having a human form.[554] Moreover, the very ban on depicting the image of God, dated by some not earlier than the second half of the sixth century,[555] implies that He was conceived as having a form in general and a human one in particular.

In order to trace theological thinking and its relation to religious practice, one should differentiate between a cultic layer, manifest in the way people act out their beliefs, and the cognitive level of their religious feelings and theological superstructure.[556] In our context, a distinction should be drawn between the biblical ban on cultic image and the Bible's anthropomorphic perception of the divine. Considering the biblical evidence, it becomes clear that the image ban reflects only the cultic layer and not the belief; this would indeed fit biblical conception, which does not seem to explore divine nature, as

552 DDD 361–362; Kaufmann 1972, 226–231; 1977, 236–237.

553 Kaufmann 1977, 237, n. 12; Geller 2000, 280–286, 308–310.

554 It has been suggested that doubts regarding the form of the divine are already manifest in Isa. 40:18 (e.g., Uffenheimer 1995, 326). However, considered together with Isa. 40:25 and 46:5, what is conveyed here is the incomparability of God, see Greenberg 1990, 101; Kaufmann 1977, 237, n. 12.

555 See Mettinger 1997, 178, 183; Berlejung 1998, 404; Dick 1999, 13–15, 17.

556 Cf. Mettinger 1995, 38, n. 114.

revealed in Mesopotamian written sources as well.[557] The biblical prohibition against worshipping God through His image thus relates only to cultic activity and does not pertain to the cognitive perception of the divine, which, similarly to the Mesopotamian one, perceived the divine as having a human shape. The Bible's anthropomorphic perception of the divine was not confined to biblical literature, but was predominant in post-biblical and later Jewish literature as well.[558] It was only among Islamic Jewry in the tenth century CE that divine materialization was first clearly rejected by Jewish thinkers, as seen in the works of Saᶜadyā Gaon (al-Fayyūmī), which were influenced by religious Islamic movements such as the Muᶜtazila.[559] This rejection, reflecting the penetration of the abstract Greek conception of the divine into Jewish thought, first noted by the sixth-century BCE Xenophanes,[560] reached its zenith with Maimonides, who radically modified traditional biblical and rabbinical perceptions.[561]

The biblical image ban appears mainly in Deuteronomistic history dealing with cultic reforms, in a few paragraphs of early prophecy, such as Micha 17–18, and in late prophecies, which, as already noted, were considered to be texts not written before the Babylonian Exile or, at the earliest, just before the Exile, at the beginning of the sixth century. Clear contempt toward the anthropomorphic cult image is apparent in late prophecy, such as in Jeremiah 10 and Isaiah 40, 41, 44, in a genre termed "prophetic parody". The problem underlying these parodies—which underlaid the biblical image ban itself—was how a man-made artifact could be considered as a god itself. These polemic texts pose the same sort of issues that have occupied the Babylonian theologian, but offered a different answer, specifically to the main biblical agenda of exalting the God of Israel. Thus, the

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557 "The notion of divinity was never explicity defined in Mesopotamia, but only described..." (Bottéro 2001, 58); Lorberbaum 1997, 51–52.

558 Goshen Gottstein 1994, 171–176, 182, 185, 188–189, 195; Lorberbaum 1997, 2–3, 5, 8–9, 21, 14–55, 261–262 (especially n. 1) and *passim*.

559 Lorberbaum 1997, 15–16; Vajda 1973, 150–152; and see Bosworth *et al.* 1993, 783–793.

560 Kaufmann 1961, 15–16; see also Uffenheimer 1995, 309–310, 327, with references; Versnel 2000, 91–113 (with bibliography).

561 Vajda 1973, 157–158; Lorberbaum 1997, 16, 269–279.

speculation as to how and in what right a human being may create a god, a divine figure, is referred to by Esarhaddon in a text describing the renovation of a cultic image from its earliest phases of consulting the oracle to its final induction in the temple. The issue is explicitly conveyed through the mouth-washing and mouth-opening (*mīs pî* and *pīt pî*) rituals, in the process of which man-made artifact became divinity itself. Most of the copies of these texts, from which the ceremonies and their accompanying incantations were reconstructed, date from the eighth–seventh centuries and thus preceded biblical references. The occurrence of the *mīs pî* ritual during the reign of Gudea, ruler of Lagash, at the close of the third millennium, further suggests that such a fundamental religious dilemma was raised in Mesopotamian theology more than a thousand years earlier than its postulation in the Bible.

The dependence of the late prophetic parodies, as well as other relevant biblical passages, on cuneiform literature is demonstrated not only by the fact that the same basic dilemmas concerning the "nature" of the man-made cult image are raised, but also by the use of similar verbal rhetoric and, at times, specific terms. For example, the *mskn* tree of Isaiah 40:20 most probably alludes to the *mussukannu* tree, from which images were made in Mesopotamia. Similarly, returning the wood to the forest after having been articulated as a statue (Isaiah 44:13–14) reflects, according to Dick, the Mesopotamian ritual in which the wooden-made image once again becomes the raw material—a tree growing in the forest. Further more, in the Sultantepe copy it is said that if the cult image has not passed the mouth-opening ritual he can neither smell incense nor eat or drink, clearly alluding to Jeremiah 10:5 and in particular to Ps. 115:5–6: "They have mouths, but cannot speak, eyes but cannot see; they have ears, but cannot hear, noses, but cannot smell."

Because of the similarity between the Mesopotamian and biblical evidence in the dualism toward the divine image and its articulation in visual form, one is inclined to treat these two phenomena as possibly associated, perhaps even complementing each other, rather than two contradictory religious world views. Moreover, the articulation of the biblical passages referring to the image ban in the final phases before the Babylonian Exile or, more probably, within the period of the Exile itself—either way during a period in which the cultural–political

Assyro-Babylonian hegemony reached its peak—clearly indicate a direct correspondence between these two religious phenomena. Because of the earlier Mesopotamian non-anthropomorphism attested visually and textually, one is inclined to perceive the biblical image ban not only as stemming from earlier West Semitic tendencies, or as an internal reaction to the crisis occurring in seventh-century Judah. The biblical ban is to be perceived as a world view basically inspired by contemporary tendencies in Babylonia and Assyria, and not, as commonly suggested, as one that opposes Mesopotamian perceptions.

Whereas the Assyro-Babylonian approach was manifest only as a widespread decorum, the ancient Israelite prohibition regarding the representations of the divine, consolidated not before the period of the Exile, became written lore. It may be conjectured that the Judahite deportees' distance from their homeland and in particular their lacking a temple for their god led to an intensification of the Mesopotamian avoidance of portraying anthropomorphic deities. Since in the Babylonian environment into which these deportees were pitched, portrayal of divine images was permitted and confined only to sacred edifices, the temple-less exiles turned the pictorial cultic reality surrounding them—the non-written Babylonian custom—into a clearly articulated rigid written law, prohibiting the representation of God.

It seems that the paucity of ancient Mesopotamian texts relating to the removal of human-shaped deities from pictorial renderings, on the one hand, and the ample literary references to divine anthropomorphism, on the other hand, may have prevented students of ancient Near Eastern art from recognizing the non-anthropomorphic properties of Mesopotamian iconography. In addition, it may be that the Judeo-Christian heritage of many scholars subconsciously prevented them from acknowledging a link with non-monotheistic religious expressions, when dealing with such a fundamental issue as the image of God.

ABBREVIATIONS

AfO	Archiv für Orientforschung
AJA	American Journal of Archaeology
AOAT	Alter Orient und Altes Testament
ANEP	Pritchard J.B., The Ancient Near East in Pictures Relating to the Old Testament, Princeton, 1954
BaM	Baghdader Mitteilungen
BASOR	Bulletin of the American Schools of Oriental Research
CAD	The Assyrian Dictionary of the Oriental Institute of the University of Chicago
CRRAI	Compte rendu de la rencontre assyriologique internationale
DDD	van der Toorn K., Becking B. and van der Horst P.W. (eds.), *Dictionary of Deities and Demons in the Bible (DDD)*, 2nd edition, Leiden, Boston and Cologne, 1999
IEJ	Israel Exploration Journal
JAOS	Journal of the American Oriental Society
JCS	Journal of Cuneiform Studies
JNES	Journal of Near Eastern Studies
JSOTS	Journal for the Study of the Old Testament, Supplement Series
MDOG	Mitteilungen der Deutschen Orient-Gesellschaft
MDP	Mémoires de la Délégation en Perse
NABU	Nouvelles Assyriologiques Brèves et Utilitaires
OBO	Orbis Biblicus et Orientalis
OBO.SA	Orbis Biblicus et Orientalis, Series Archaeologica
PKG	Orthmann W. (ed.), *Der Alte Orient* (Propyläen Kunstgeschichte 14), Berlin, 1975
RA	Revue d'Assyriologie et Archéologie
RIMA	The Royal Inscriptions of Mespotamia, Assyrian Periods
RlA	Reallexikon der Assyriologie
SAA	State Archives of Assyria
W(V)DOG	Wissenschaftliche Veröffentlichungen der Deutschen Orient-Gesellschaft
ZA	Zeitschrift für Assyriologie und Vorderasiatische Archäologie

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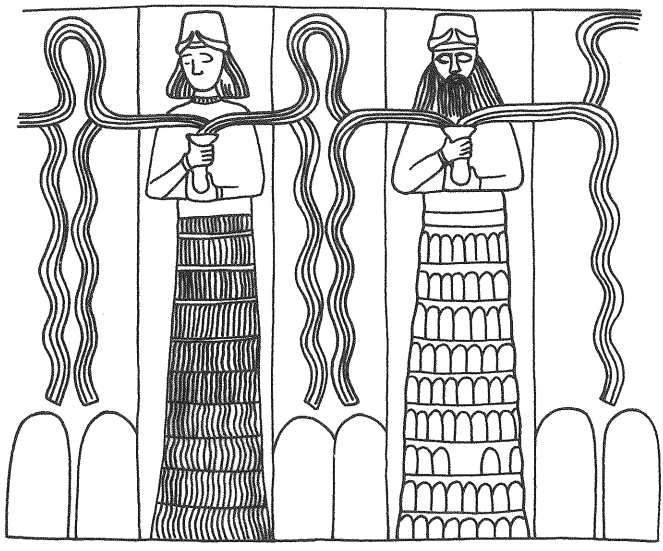

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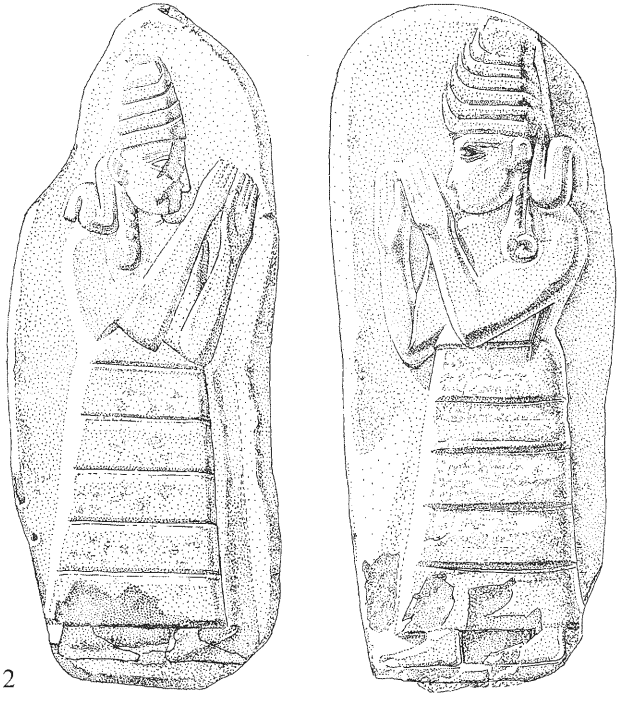

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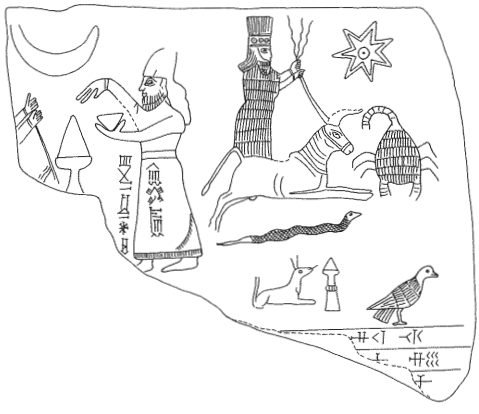

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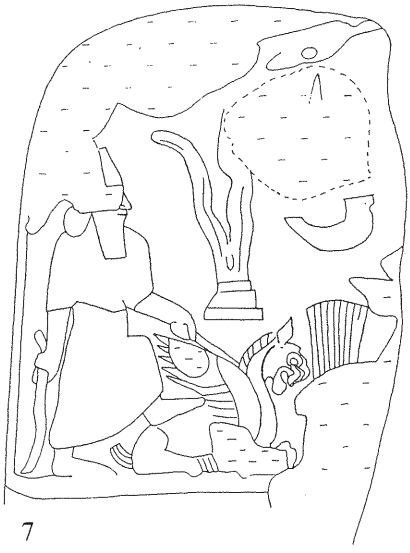
5. Nanaya, Meli Shipak and his daughter, *kudurru*, Susa (after Seidl 1989, pl. 11a)
6. God with lightning fork, *kudurru* of Meli Shipak, Susa (after Seidl 1989, pl. 10b)



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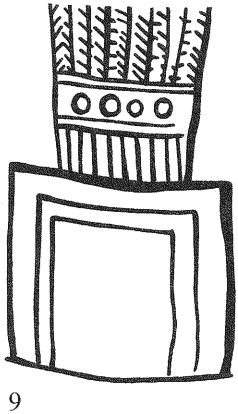

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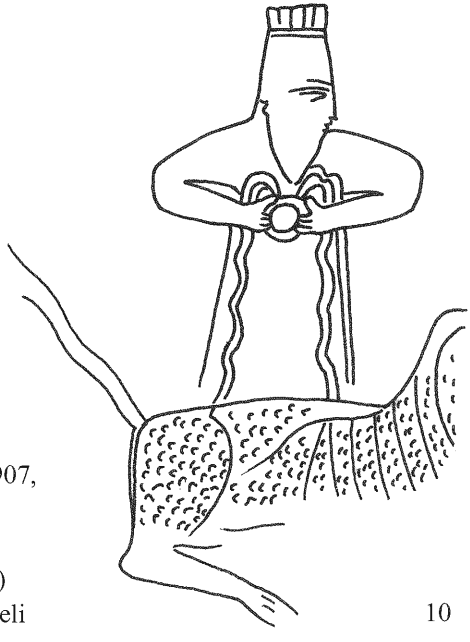

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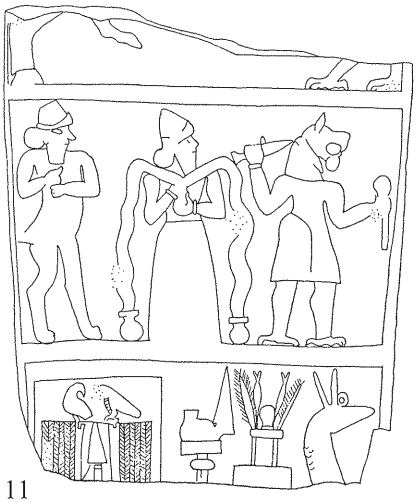
7. God with dragon-lion, *kudurru* of Meli Shipak, Nippur (Seidl 1989, 27, fig. 3)
8. Royal worshipper, *kudurru* of Marduk-nādin-aḫḫe Babylon (Hinke 1907, fig. 50)
9. Feathered mitre, *kudurru* of Enlil-nādin-apli (after King 1912, pl. 3)
10. God with flowing vase, *kudurru* of Meli Shipak, Susa (after MDP I, fig. 383)



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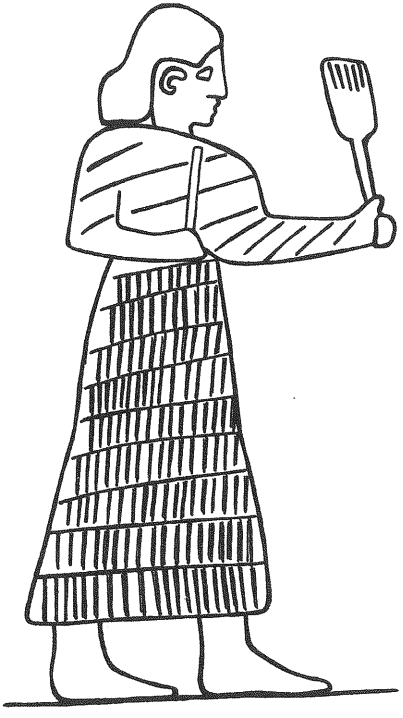

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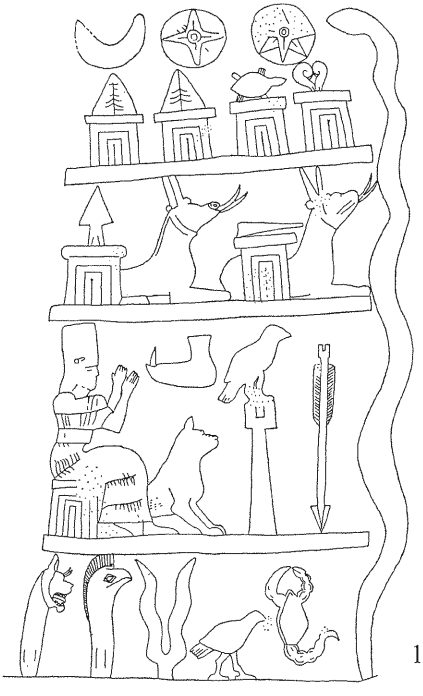
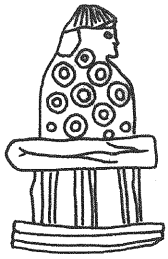


14

11. Deity with flowing vase, *kudurru*, twelfth century (Seidl 1989, fig. 10)
12. Marduk, *kudurru* of Meli Shipak (Schroer 1987, fig. 86)
13. Shala, *kudurru* of Meli Shipak (after King 1912, pl. 30c)
14. Gula and divine emblems, *kudurru*, eleventh century (Seidl 1989, fig. 11)



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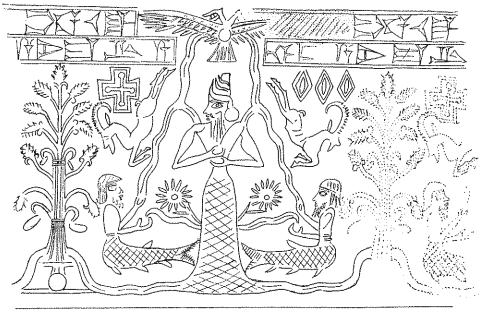

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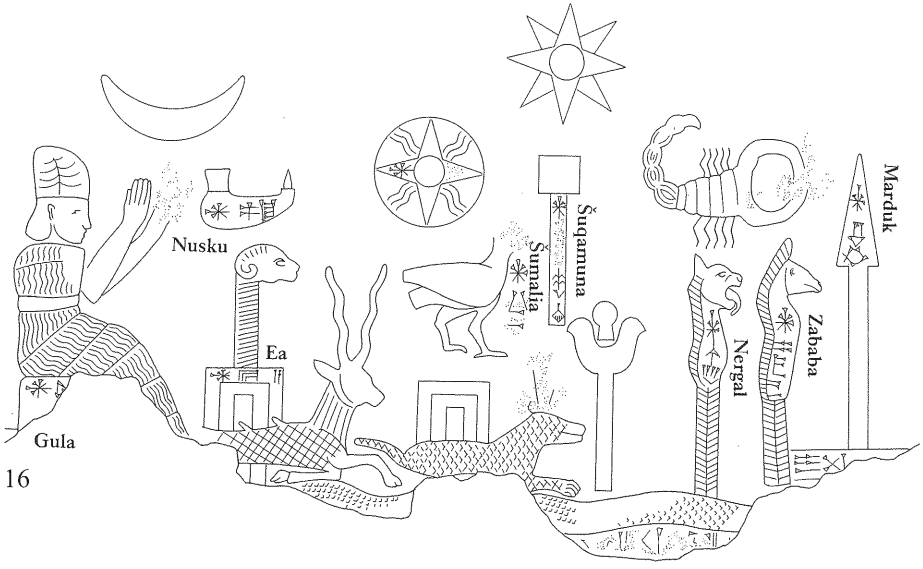

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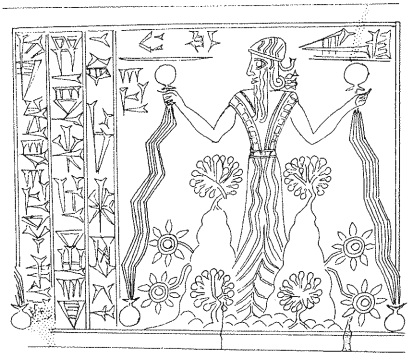
15. Bust of Gula, *kudurru* of Meli Shipak, Susa (after MDP VII, fig. 458)
16. Gula, *kudurru* of Meli Shipak, Susa (Black and Green 1992, fig. 7)
17. God with anthropomorphic and natural features, Kassite cylinder seal, Thebes (Porada 1981, no. 27)
18. God with anthropomorphic and natural features, Kassite cylinder seal, Thebes (Porada 1981, no. 26)



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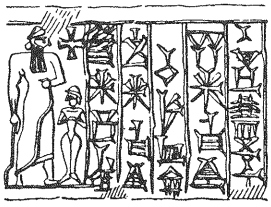

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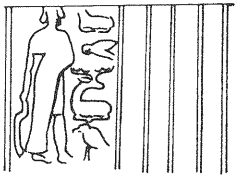

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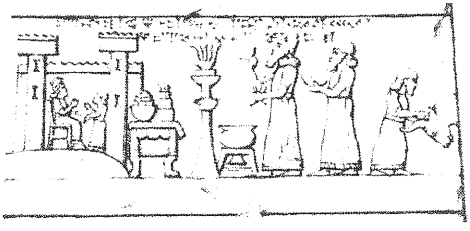

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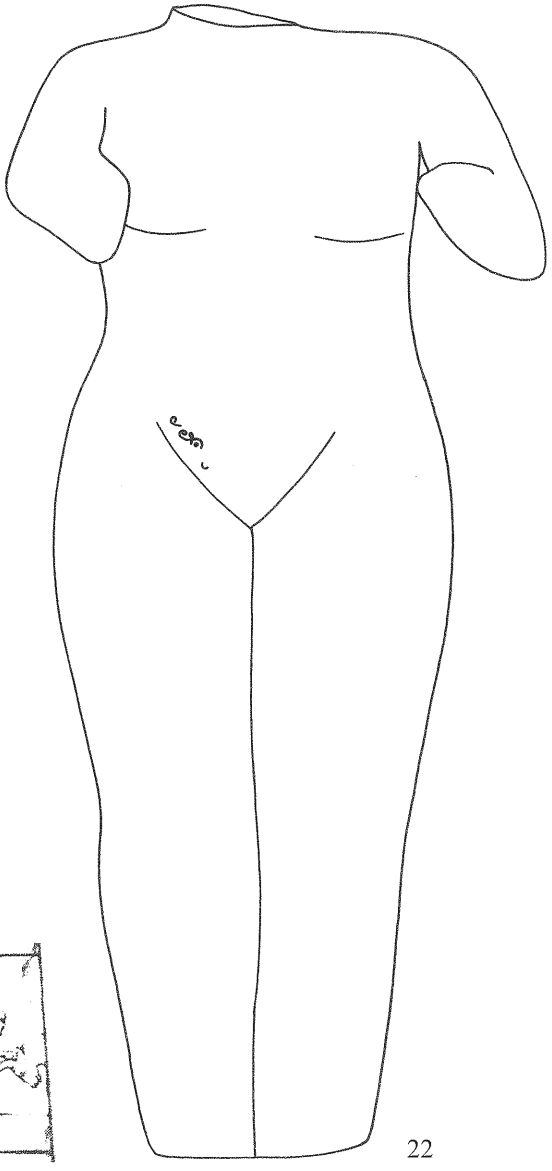

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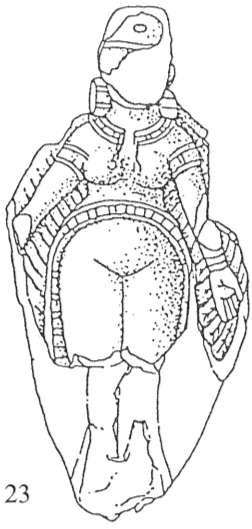
19. God with scimitar, Kassite cylinder seal (Matthews 1990, no. 76)
20. God with scimitar, Kassite cylinder seal, Nuzi (Matthews 1990, no. 77)
21. Enthroned goddess, the White Obelisk, Nineveh (Börker-Klähn 1982, no. 132a)
22. Nude female sculpture, Nineveh (after PKG, pl. 170)



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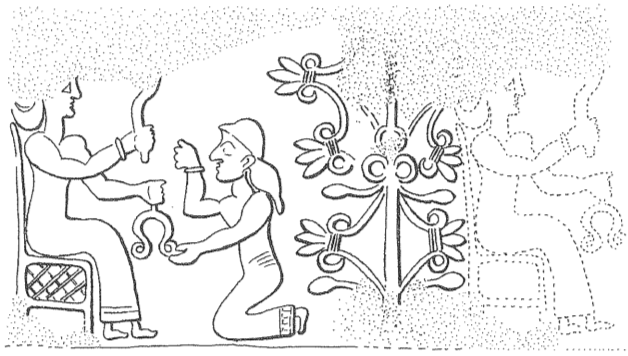

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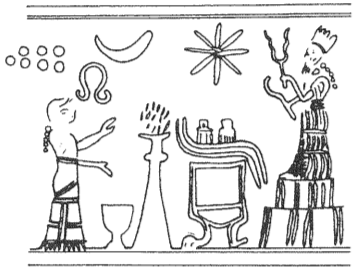

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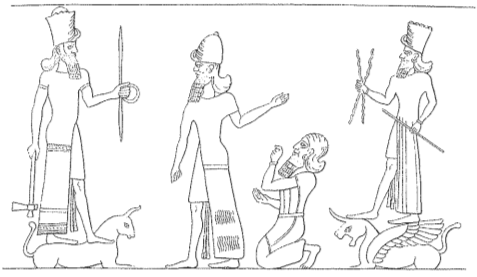

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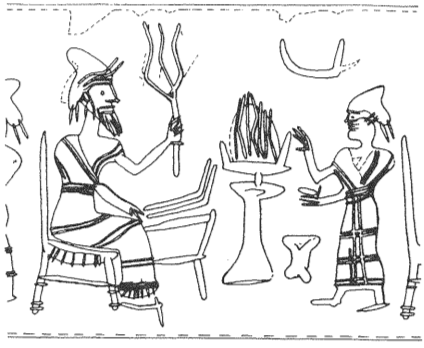

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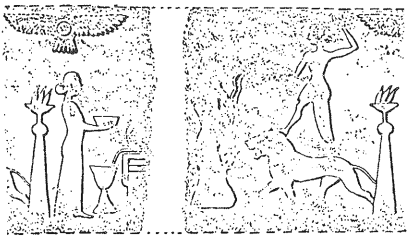
23. Winged goddess, gypsum vessel, Ashur (Harper *et al.* 1995, fig. 23)
24. Seal impression of Iamut-hamadi, Emar (Beyer 2001, 276:G2)
25. Ashur and Adad, Impression C (Wiseman 1958, fig. 6)
26. Adad, cylinder seal, Tyre (Matthews 1990, no. 533)
27. God with lightning fork, cylinder seal (Matthews 1990, no. 521)
28. God with lightning fork, cylinder seal, Beer-Sheba (Ornan 2003a, fig. 1)



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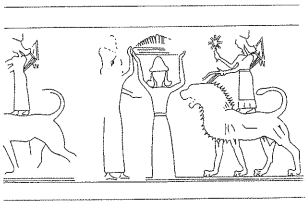

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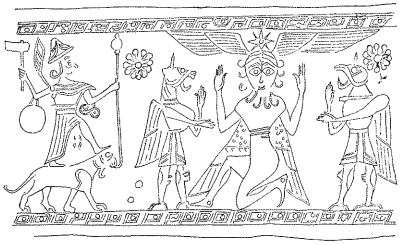

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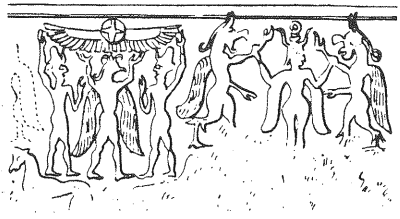

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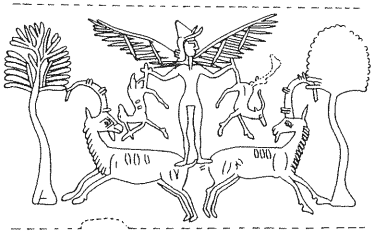

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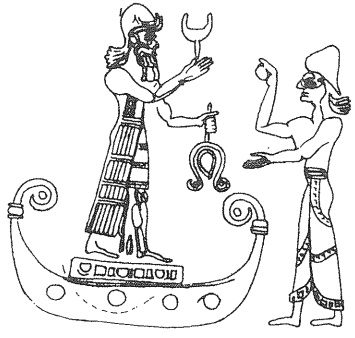

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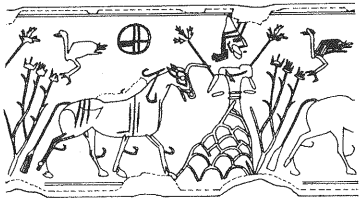

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29. Ishtar on lion, seal impression, Ashur (Matthews 1990, no. 535)
30. Ishtar on lion, seal impression, Tell Billa (Matthews 1991, no. 34)
31. Warrior goddess on lion, cylinder seal, Thebes (Porada 1981, no. 23)
32. Egyptionized goddess, cylinder seal (Matthews 1990, no. 477)
33. Winged goddess, cylinder seal (Matthews 1990, no. 429)
34. Sin in boat, cylinder seal, Samsat (Matthews 1990, no. 534)
35. God with anthropomorphic and natural features, cylinder seal (Matthews 1990, no. 339)

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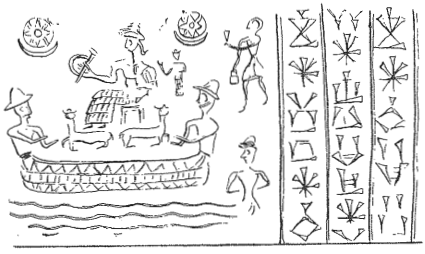

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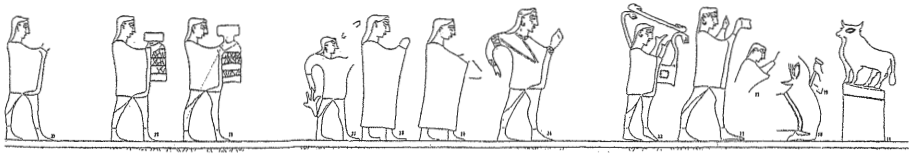

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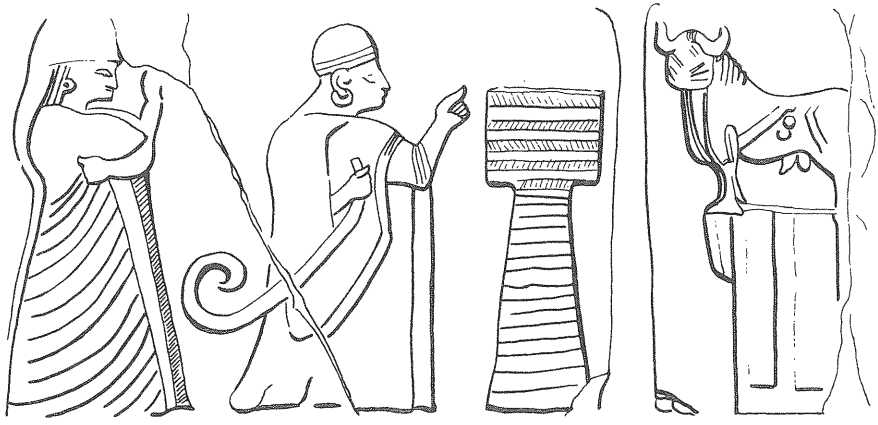
36. The Well Relief, Ashur (Stein 1994a, fig. 1)
37. Water and plants' goddesses, cylinder seal, Mari (Amiet 1960, fig. 5)
38. Minor deities merging with flowing water (Amiet 1960, fig. 2a)
39. Lightning fork on a bull, cylinder seal (Ornan 1995, fig. 18)
40. Worship of bull, Old Hittite relief vase, Inandik (Özgüç 1988, fig. 64)



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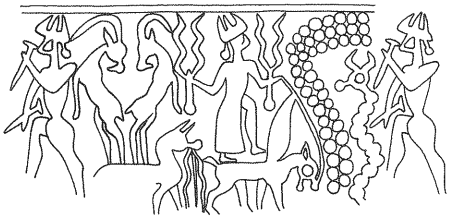

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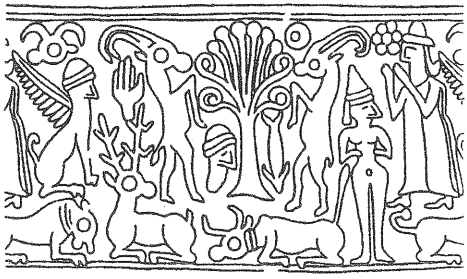

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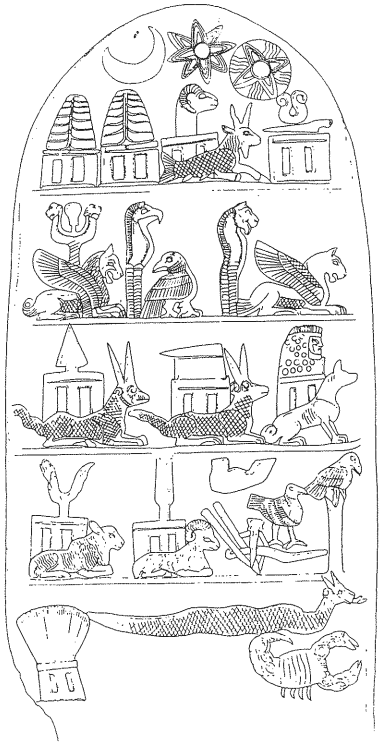

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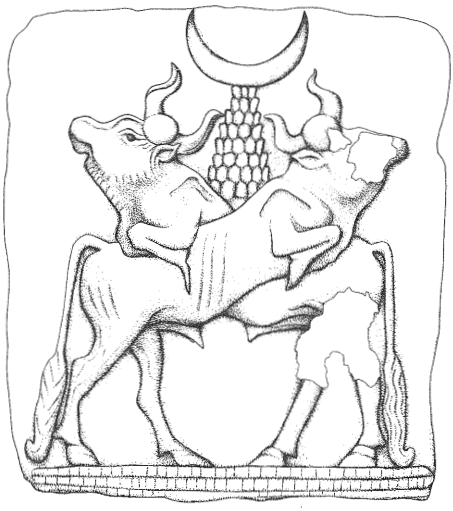
41. Worship of bull, Hittite wall relief, Alaca Höyük (Keel 1997b, fig. 318)
42. Caprids representing Shaushka, seal impression, Nuzi (Stein 1988, fig. 11)
43. Cylinder seal, Megiddo (Keel 1998, fig. 48)
44. Divine emblems, *kudurru* of Meli Shipak, Susa (Ornan 1995, fig. 25)



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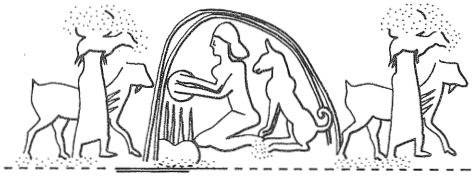

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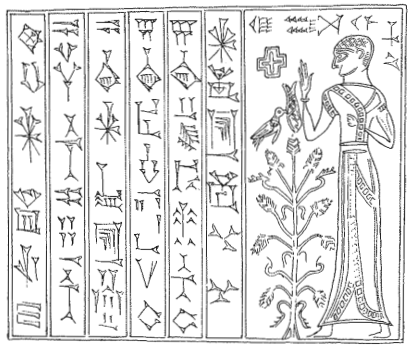

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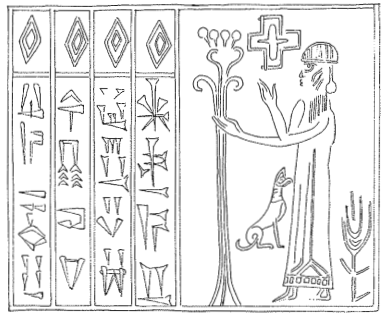

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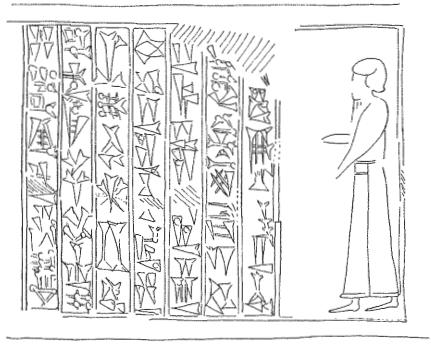

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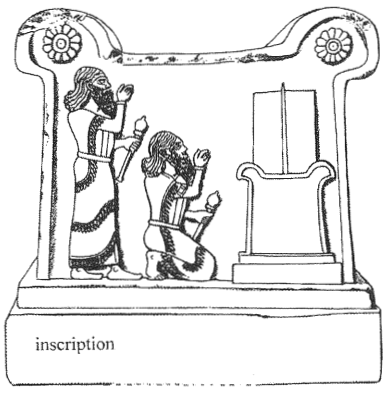
45. Crescent on bulls, Old Babylonian terracotta (Ornan 2001b, fig. 10)
46. Seal impression of Tishpak-gimil (Porada 1980, fig. b)
47. Dog, seal impression, Tell Rimah (Parker 1974, fig. 1)
48. Worshipper, cylinder seal, Thebes (Porada 1981, no. 32)
49. Worshipper, cylinder seal, Thebes (Porada 1981, no.33)
50. Worshipper, cylinder seal, Thebes (Porada 1981, no.34)



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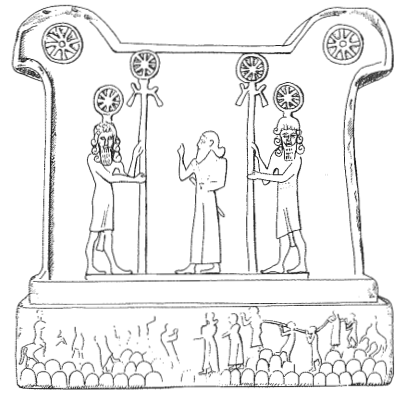

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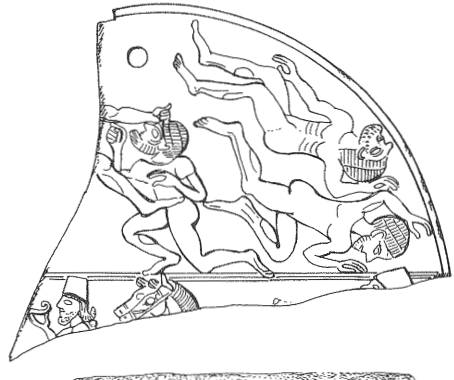

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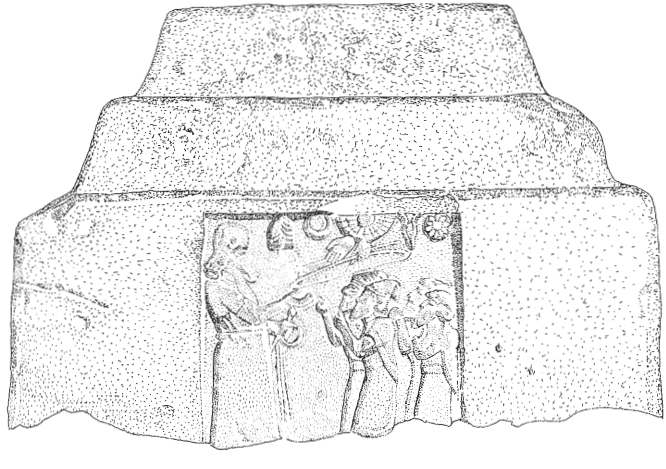

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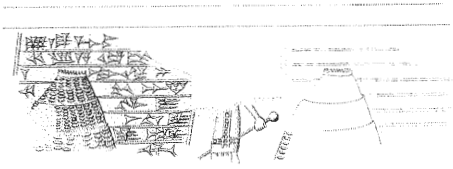
51. Pedestal of Tukulti Ninurta I, Ashur (after Stein 1994a, fig. 2)
52. Pyxis lid, Ashur (Stein 1994a, fig. 5)
53. Pedestal of Tukulti Ninurta I, Ashur (Stein 1994a, fig. 3)
54. The Broken Obelisk, Nineveh (Börker-Klähn 1982, no. 131)



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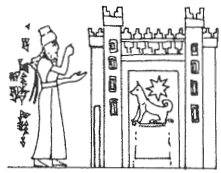

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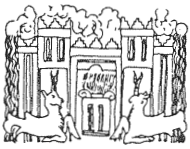

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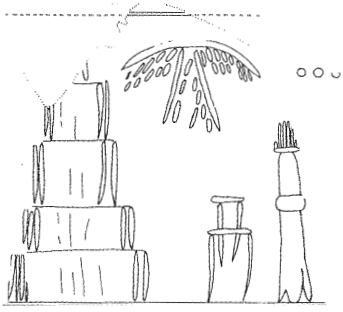

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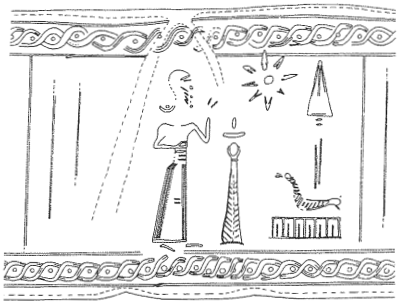

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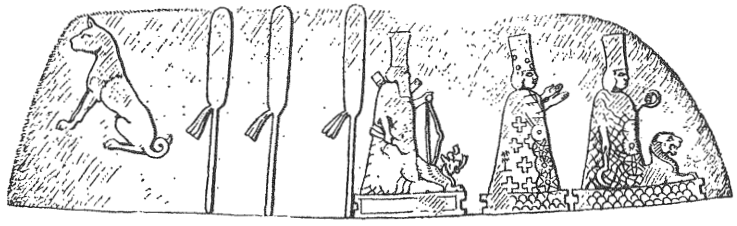
55. Seal impression, Shalmaneser I, Dûr-katlimmu (Kühne and Röllig 1989, pl. 59:1)
56. Worshipper-king, dog and star, seal impression, Tiglath-pileser I, Ashur (Matthews 1990, no. 530)
57. Seal impression, Tiglath-pileser I, Ashur (Matthews 1990, no. 529)
58. Worshipper facing ziggurat, cylinder seal, Ashur (Matthews 1990, no. 528)
59. Worshipper facing ziggurat, cylinder seal, Babylon (Matthews 1990, no. 527)
60. Ziggurat, cylinder seal, Tell Mohammed Arab (Collon 1988, no. 9)
61. Worshipper before spade (Collon 1987, no. 562)



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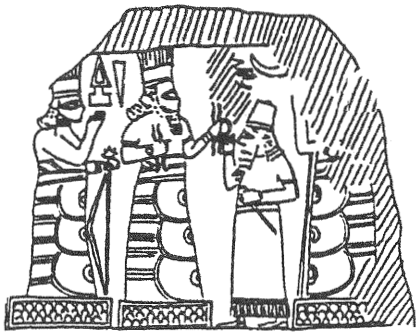
62. Deities on *kudurru* (after Seidl 1989, fig. 22c)
63. Goddess, Uruk (after Becker 1993, pl. 50:795)



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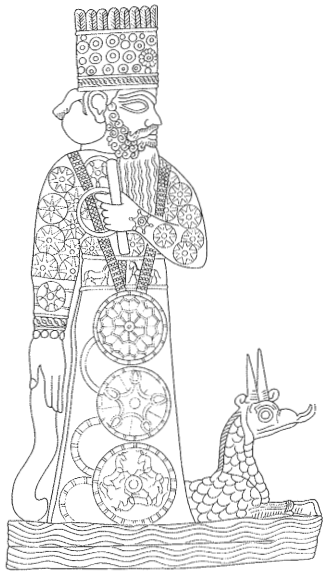

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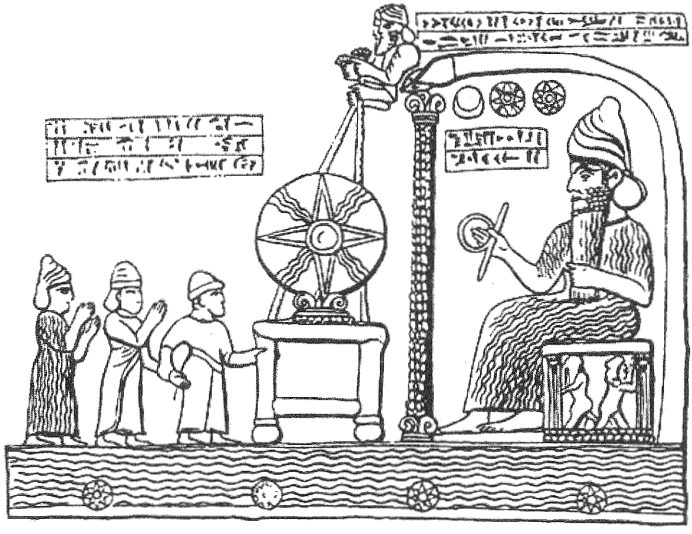
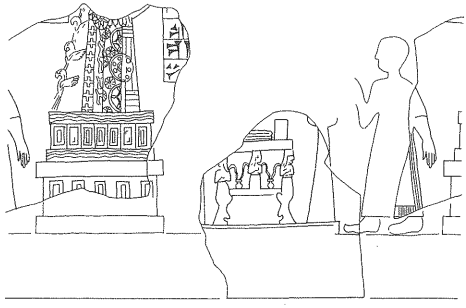


65

64. Adad, Ishtar, Anat, stela of Šamaš-reš-uṣur, Babylon (Cavigneaux and Ismail 1990, 324)
65. The Shamash Tablet, Sippar (after Mettinger 1995, fig. 2.7)
66. Marduk, lapis lazuli cylinder, Babylon (Black and Green 1992, fig. 105)

67



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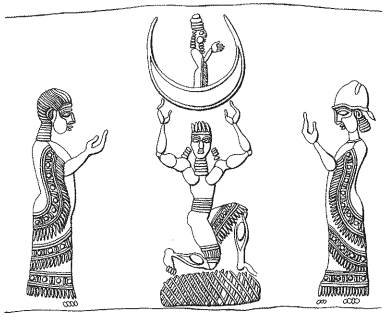

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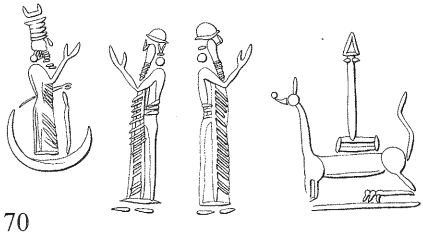

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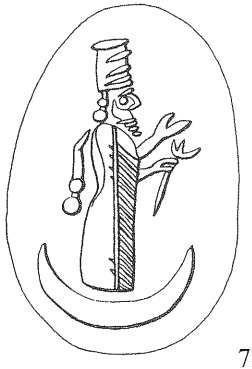

72

67. Adad, lapis lazuli cylinder, Babylon (Collon 1987, no. 563)
68. Deity, fragmentary cylinder, Persepolis (Seidl 2000, fig. 9)
69. Sin in crescent, cylinder seal (after Collon 2001, no. 229)
70. Sin and the spade of Marduk, cylinder seal (after Collon 2001, no. 230)
71. Sin in crescent, Aramaic seal (Ornan 1993, fig. 26)
72. Sin in crescent, Aramaic seal (Ornan 1993, fig. 32)

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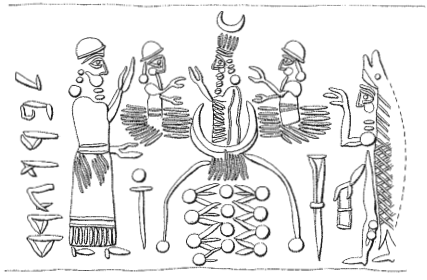
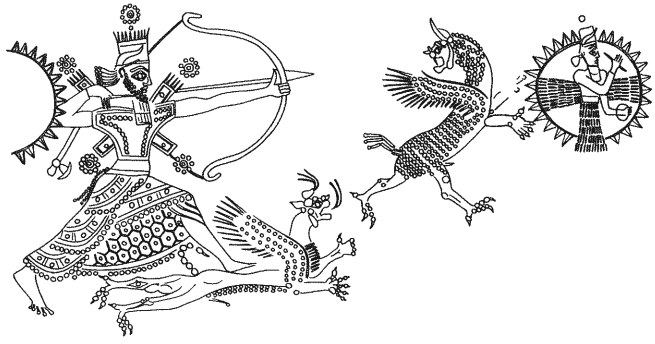


77

73. Sin in crescent, seal impression, Carchemish (Herbordt 1992, pl. 3:14)
74. Sin in a winged crescent, Moabite seal (Ornan 1997, no. 219)
75. Sin in crescent above palm shoot, Aramaic seal (Ornan 1993, fig. 30)
76. Sin in crescent above stylized tree, stamp seal (after Delaporte 1910, no. 538)
77. Sin in winged crescent, Aramaic cylinder seal (Ornan 1997, fig. 37)



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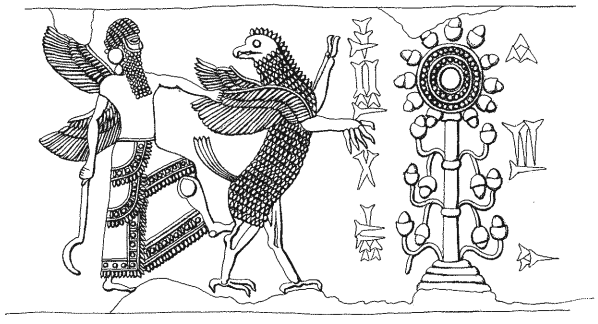
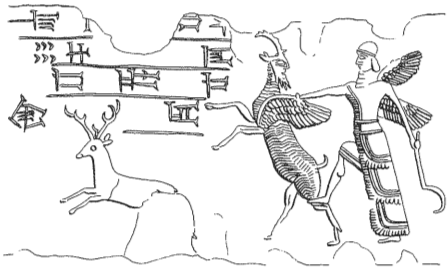


80

78. Warrior god, Babylonian cylinder seal mentioning Eriba-Marduk (after Porada 1993, fig. 46)
79. Winged deities, Babylonian cylinder seal (after Moortgat 1940, no. 610)
80. Fighting god, Babylonian cylinder seal (after von der Osten 1936, no. 129)



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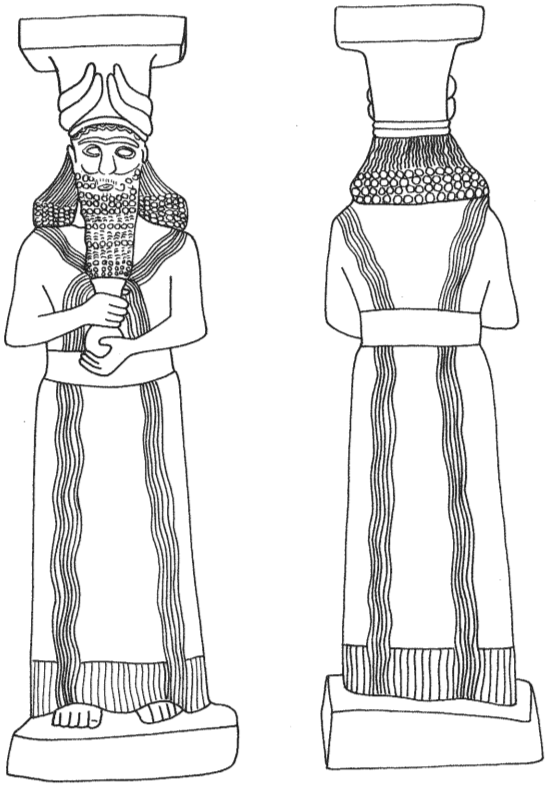
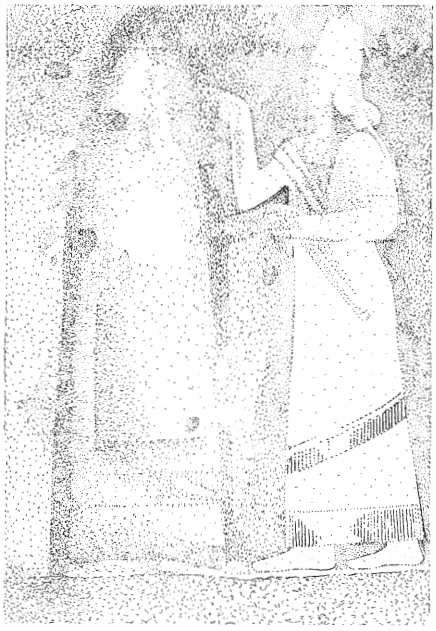


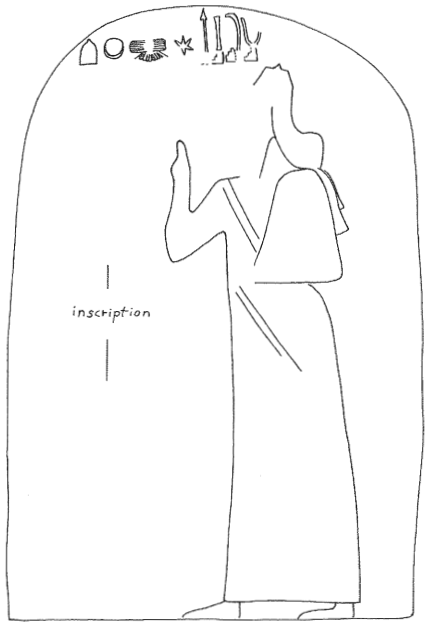
82

83

81. Fighting god, Babylonian cylinder seal (Keel 1978, 89, fig. 14)
82. Statue of minor god, Khorsabad (Strommenger 1970, fig. 13)
83. Statue of minor god, Nimrud (Strommenger 1970, fig. 8a)



84a

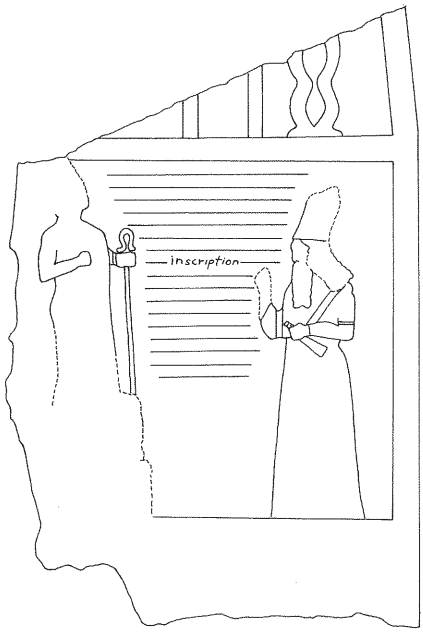


84b

85

84. Rock relief,
Tiglath-pileser III,
Mila Mergi;
(a] Börker-Klähn 1982,
no. 170;
b] after Postgate 1973,
fig. 1)

85. Rock relief, Karabur
(Börker-Klähn 1982,
no. 237)



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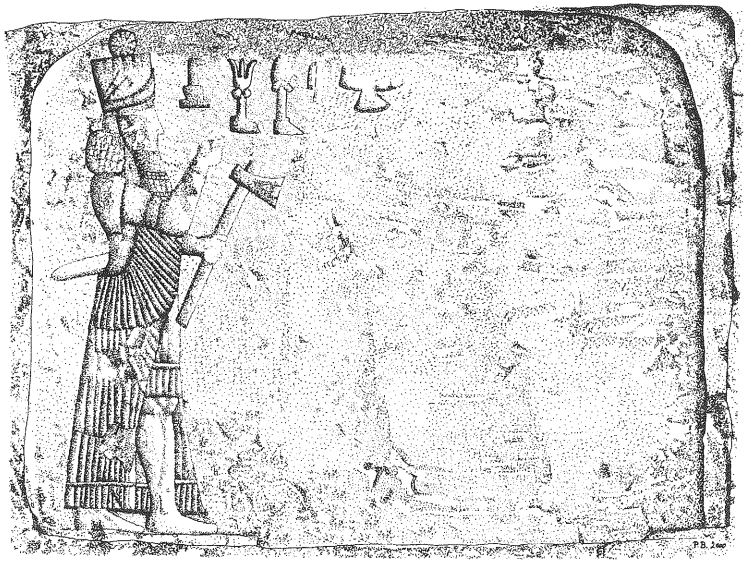
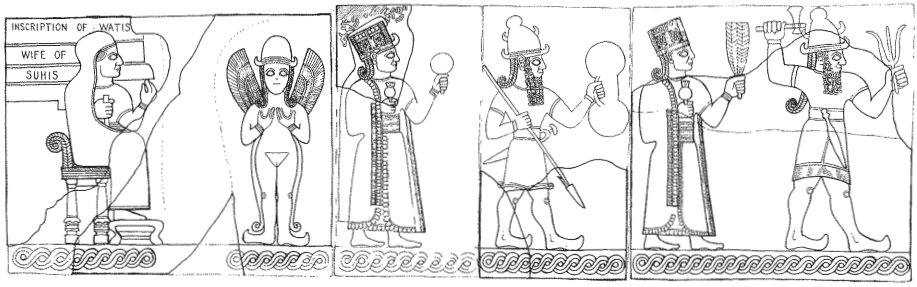


87

86. Stela of Ninurta-kudurri-uṣur, ʿAna (Abdul-Amir 1997, pl. 6: fig. 10)
87. Warrior god and emblems, rock relief, Eğil (Bartl 1999–2001, fig. 5)



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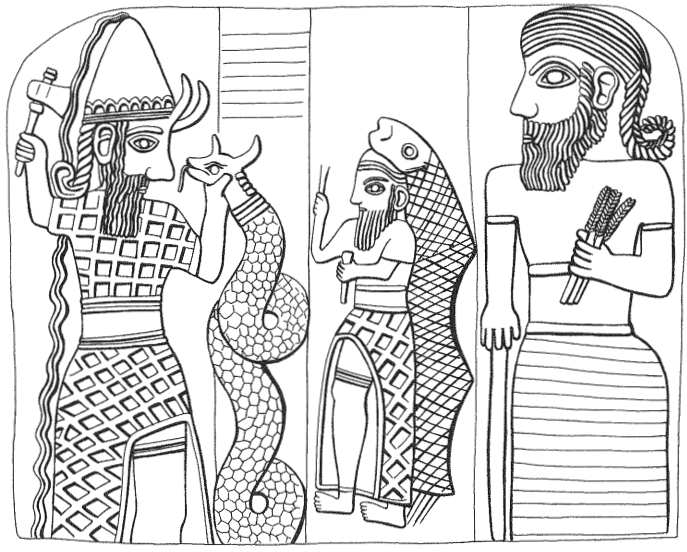


89

88. The Long Wall, Carchemish (Hawkins 1980, pl. IV:a)
89. Warrior god, stela, Tell Ashara (after Masetti-Rouault 2001, figs. 9–14)

90

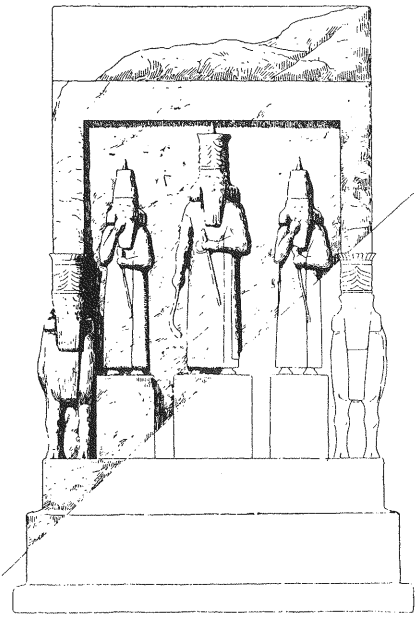
91

92

93

90. Ishtar of Arȧbela, a stela, Til Barsip (Ornan 2001a, fig. 9.10)
91. Storm god on bull, stela Arslan-Tash (Black and Green 1992, fig. 89)
92. God and worshipper, stela, Ashur (Madhloom 1970, pl. 60: 5)
93. God and worshipper, glazed orthostat, Ashur (Madhloom 1970, pl. 67:2)

94



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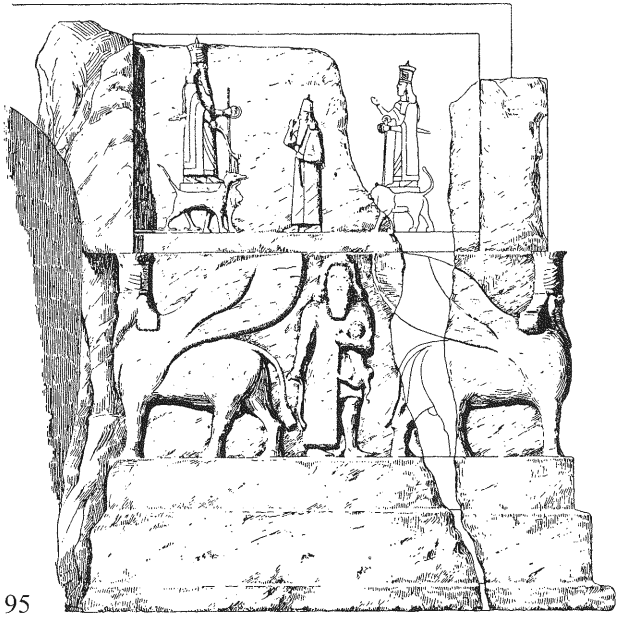
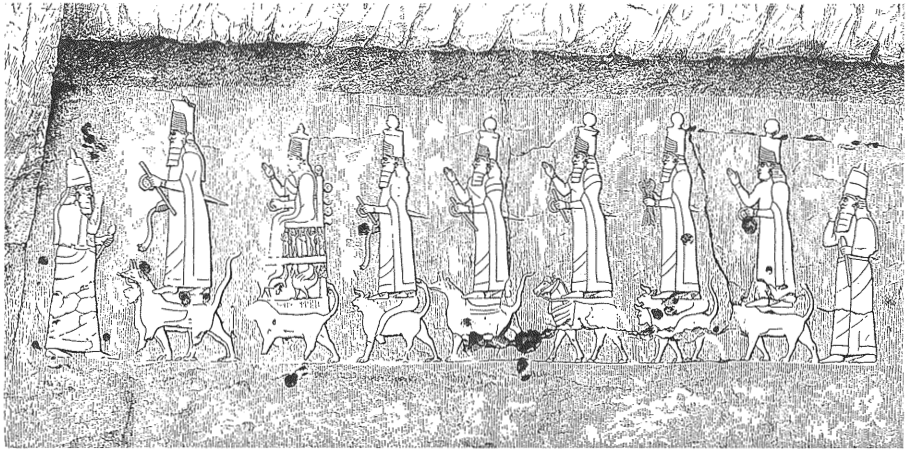


95

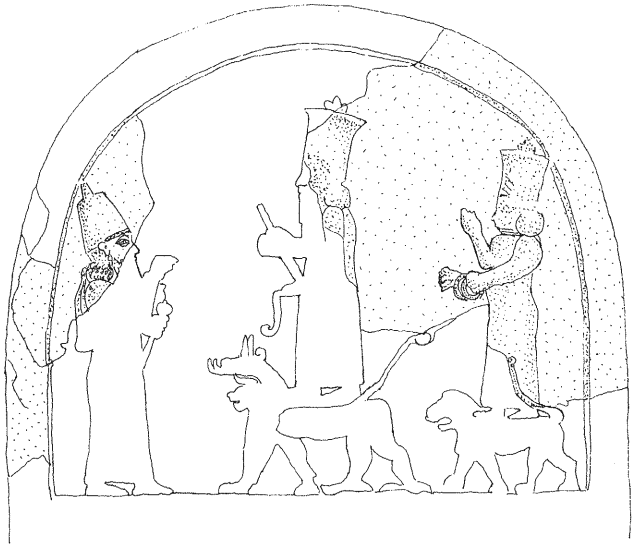
94. The "Great Relief", Bavian (Börker-Klähn 1982, no. 187a)
95. The "Gate" canal head relief, Bavian (Börker-Klähn 1982, no. 188)
96. The "Gate" canal head relief, Bavian (Börker-Klähn 1982, no. 188)



97a

97b

97. a) Rock relief, Maltai (ANEP, fig. 537); b) detail: Ninlil (Curtis 1988b, fig. 82)



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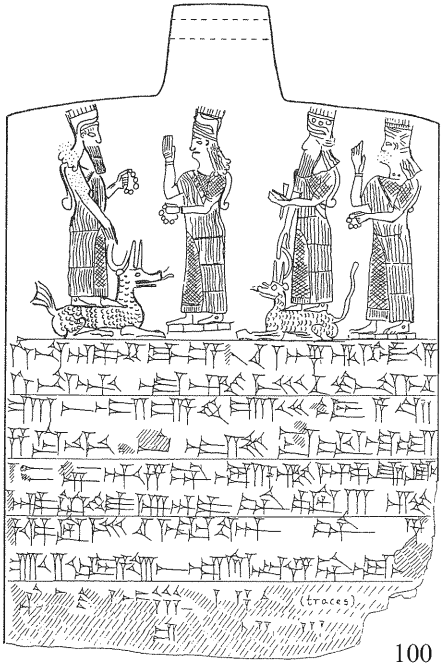
99



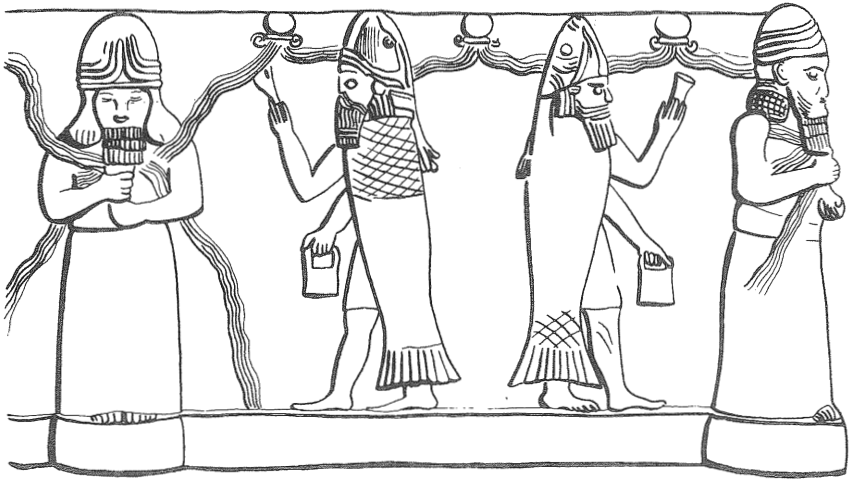
100

98. The *bit akitu* stela, Ashur (Börker-Klähn 1982, no. 205)
99. Wall plaque, Ashur (Börker-Klähn 1982, no. 243)
100. Amulet-shaped plaque (Postgate 1987, 62)

101

103

101. Bronze amulet (Braun-Holzinger 1984, pl. 55: 288)
102. Basalt basin, Ashur (Keel 1997, fig. 185)
103. Stela of Esarhaddon, Til Barsip (Börker-Klähn 1982, no. 217)



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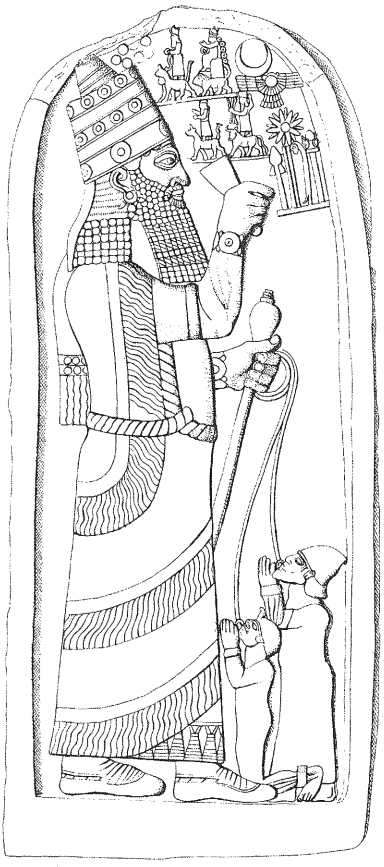


104a

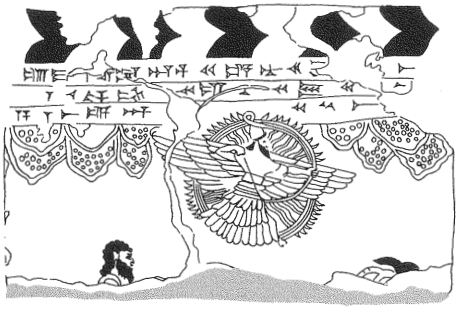
104b

104. a) Stela of Esarhaddon, Zinjirli; b) detail (Börker-Klähn 1982, no. 219)

105. Ninurta, wall relief, Nimrud (Frankfort 1996, fig. 188)

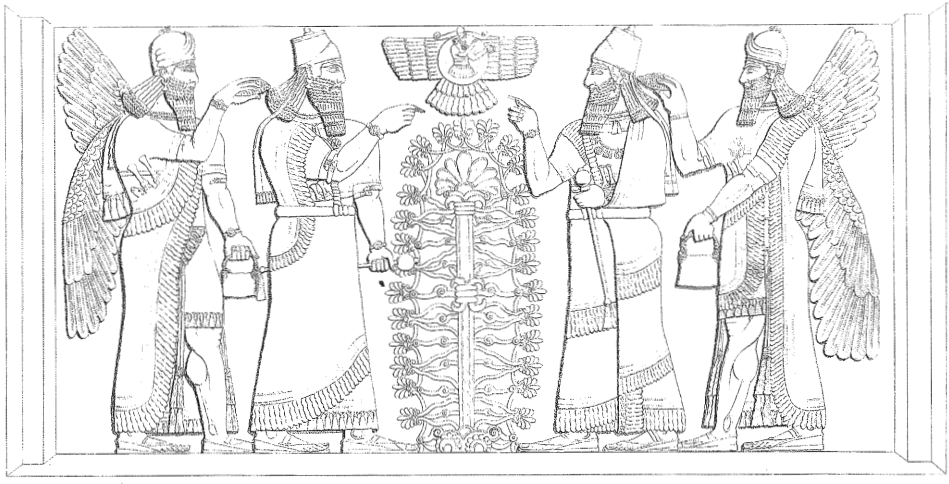
105

106

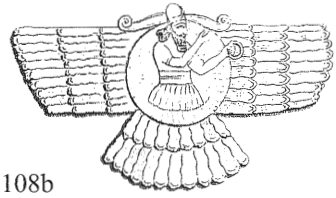


107

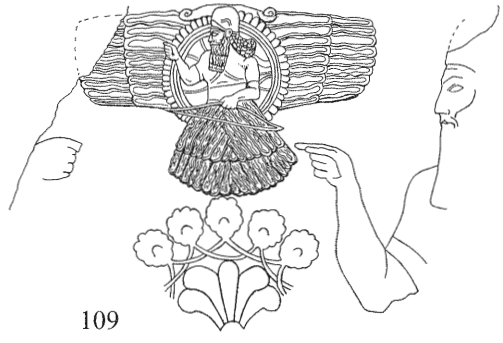
106. Reconstructed mural, Khorsabad (ANEP, fig. 609)
107. Winged Ashur, glazed tile, Ashur (Keel 1997b, fig. 295)



108a



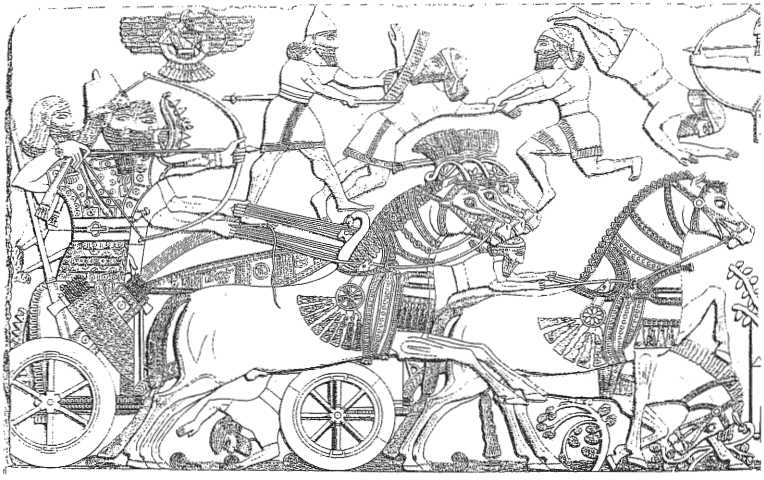
108b



109

108. a–b) Ashur in winged disc, North-West Palace (slab 23), Nimrud (Layard 1849, pl. 25.)

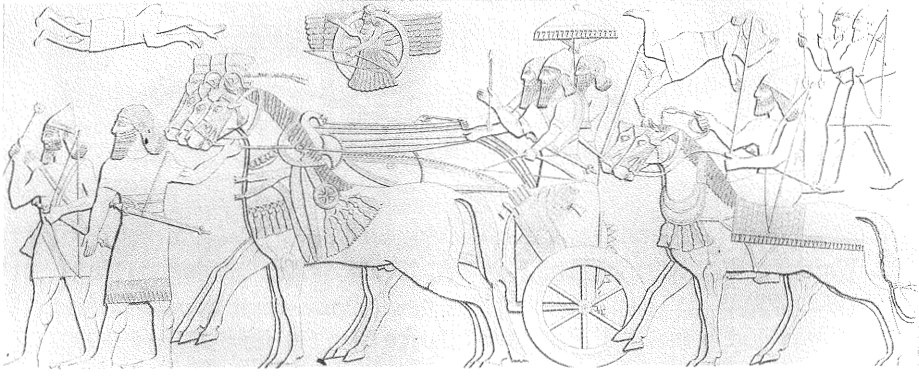
109. Ashur in winged disc, North-West Palace (slab 13), Nimrud (Calmeyer 1984, fig. 7)



110a

110b

110. Ashur, North-West Palace (slab 3), Nimrud (a] Layard 1849, pl. 13; b] Keel 1997b, fig. 296)
111. Ashur, North-West Palace (slab 5), Nimrud (Layard 1849, pl. 21)



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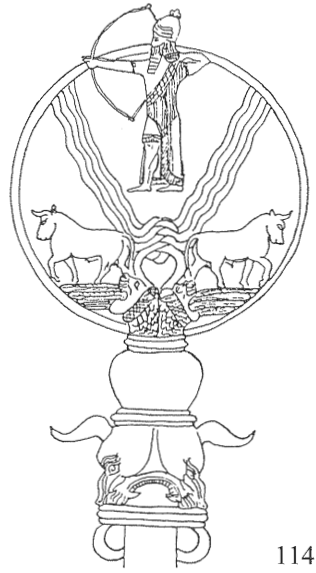
112



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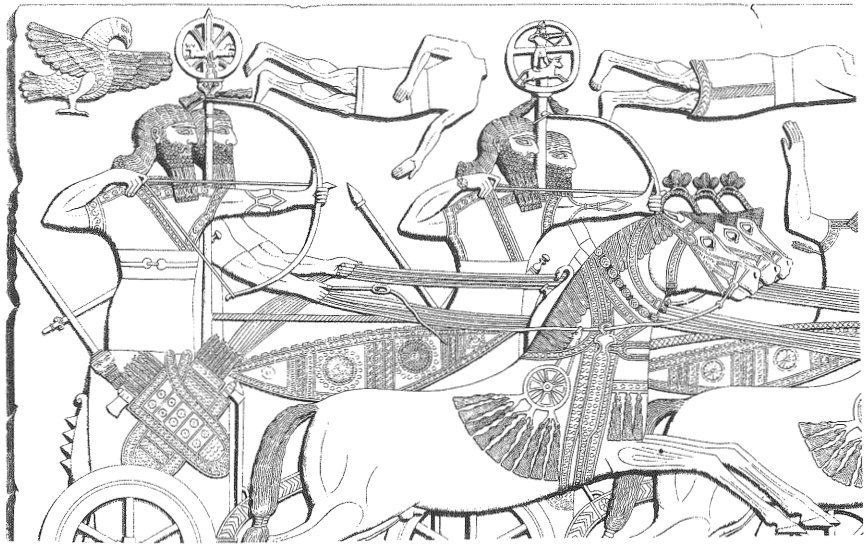
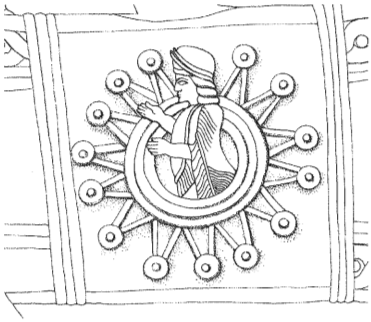


113

112. Warrior god on battering ram, North-West Palace (slab 4), Nimrud (Yadin 1963, 389)
113. Warrior god in standard, North-West Palace (slab 6), Nimrud (Keel 1992, fig. 173)
114. Warrior god in standard, wall relief, Khorsabad (Keel 1992, fig. 172)



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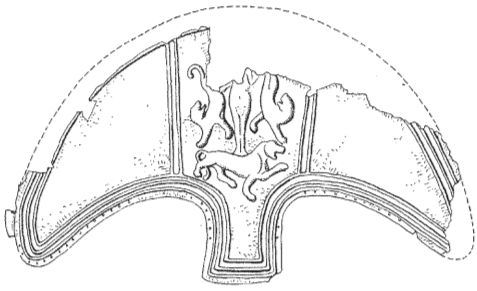

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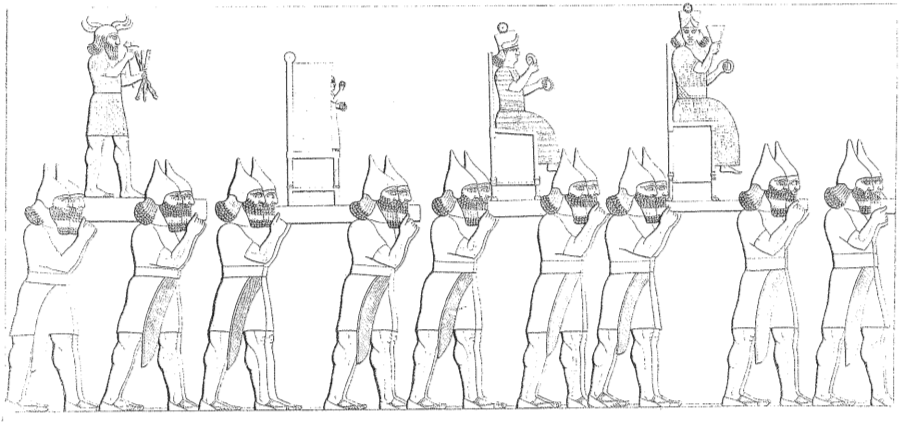

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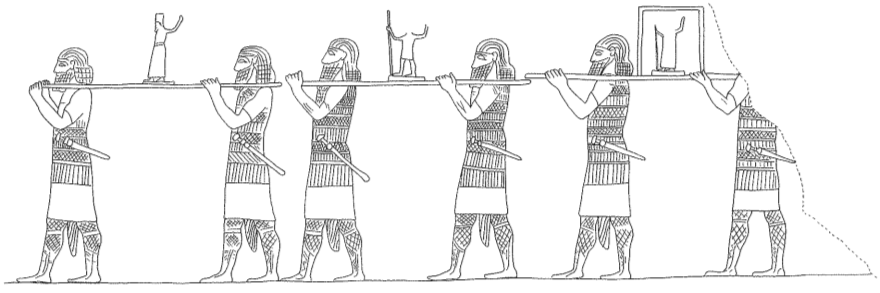
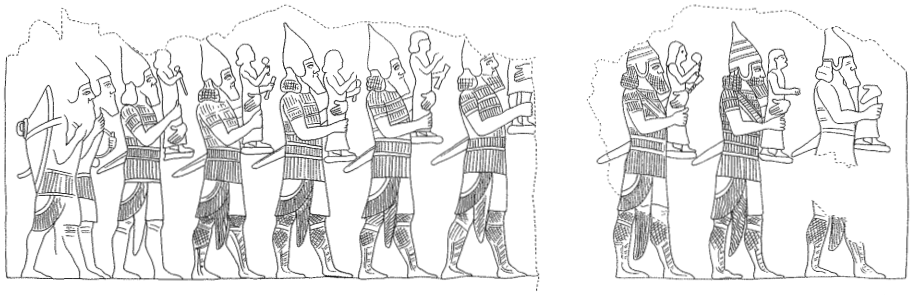


118

115. Ishtar on yoke-pole, North Palace, Nineveh (Ornan 2001a, fig. 9.9)
116. Naked goddess on chariot pole, Zinjirli (von Luschan 1943, fig. 90)
117. Looting foreign divine statues, wall relief, Tiglath-pileser III, Nimrud (Barnett and Falkner 1962, pl. 92)
118. Looting foreign divine statues, South-West Palace, Nineveh (after Barnett *et al.* 1998, pl. 143: 214a)



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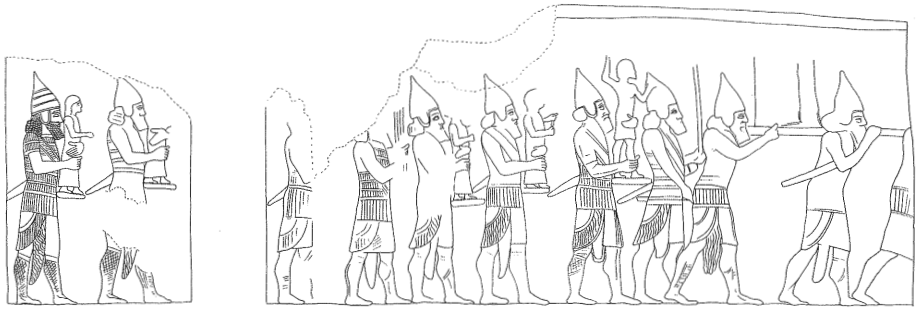

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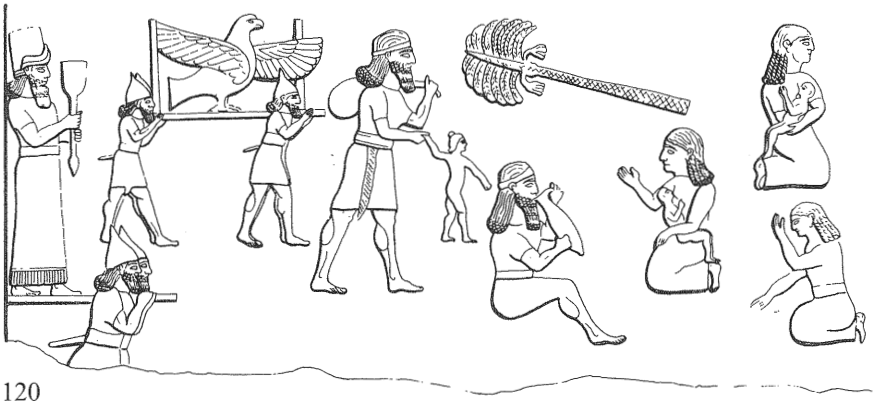

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119. Looting foreign divine statues, South-West Palace, Nineveh (after Barnett *et al.* 1998, pls. 451, 453)

120. Looting Babylonian divine sculptures, wall relief, Tiglath-pieser III, Nimrud (Keel 1997b, fig. 316)

121

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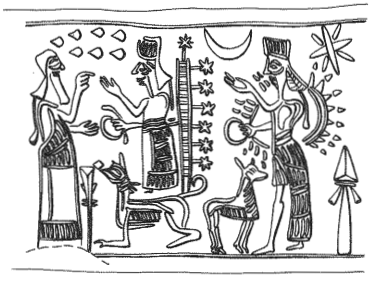
123

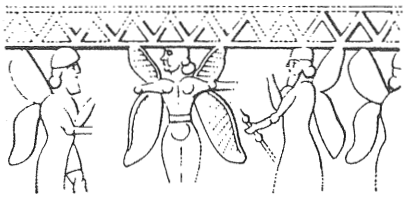
124



125

126

121. Ea, Ishtar and fish-*apkallu,* cylinder seal of Ashur-bissuni (after Moortgat 1940, no. 597)
122. Neo-Assyrian cylinder seal (Winter 1983, fig. 504)
123. Scaraboid seal, Ashur (after Jacob-Rost 1997, no. 199)
124. Cylinder seal of Nabu-uṣalla (Watanabe 1992, 357)
125. Neo-Assyrian cylinder seal (Ornan 2004b, fig. 1c)
126. Seal impression, Nineveh (Herbordt 1992, pl. 15:14)



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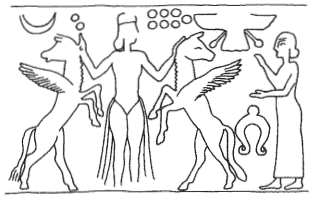

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129

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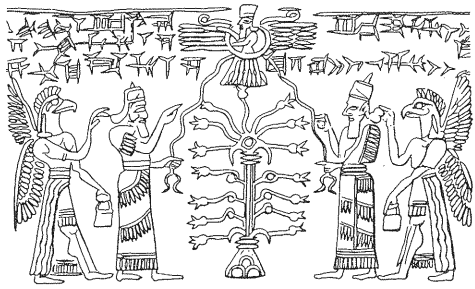
131

132

127. Seal impression, Nimrud (Herbordt 1992, pl. 3:11)
128. Seal impression, Ashur (Klengel-Brandt 1996, fig. 24)
129. Neo-Assyrian cylinder seal, Borsippa (Schroer 1987, fig. 88)
130. Cylinder seal of Bel-asharedu (Tadmor and Tadmor 1995, figs. 1, 2)
131. Impression, the Seal of Destinies (Wiseman 1958, 16, fig.2)
132. Royal couple and goddess, bula, Ashur (Klengel-Brandt 1994, 147)



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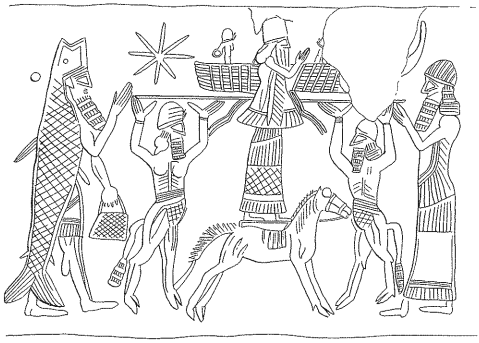

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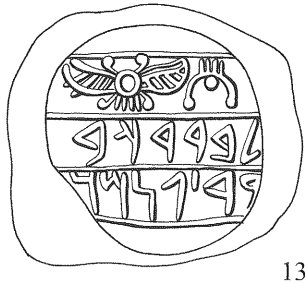

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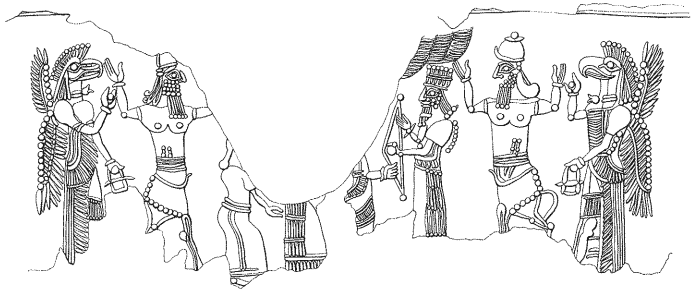

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133. Cylinder seal of Mushezib-Ninurta, Sherif Khan (Jacob-Rost 1997, fig. 1)
134. Neo-Assyrian cylinder seal (Schroer 1987, fig. 107)
135. Impression of Barrakib, Zinjirli (after von Luschan 1943, pl. 38b)
136. Cylinder seal of Mushezib-Ninurta, Babylon (after Moortgat 1940, no. 600)

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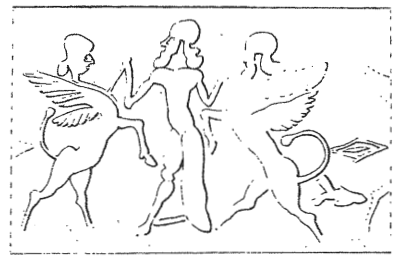

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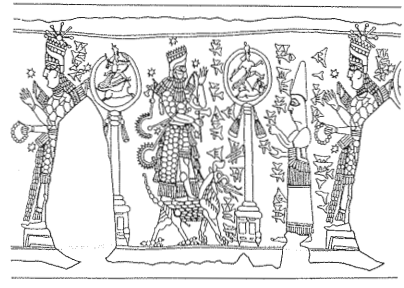

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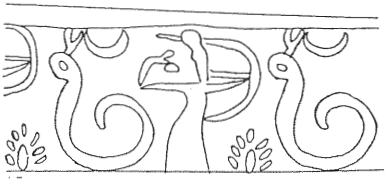

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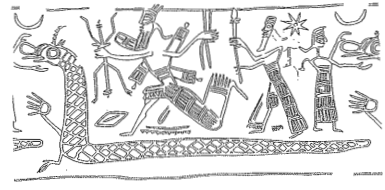

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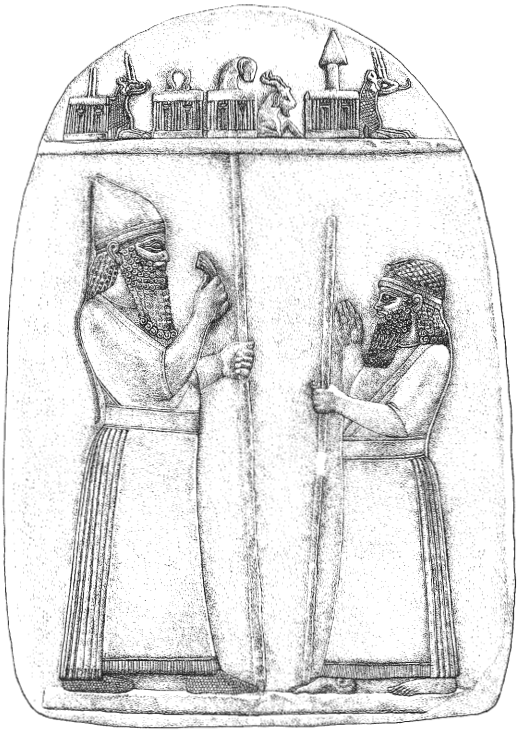
137. Neo-Assyrian cylinder seal (Keel 1978, fig. 46)
138. Seal impression, Ashur (Herbordt 1992, pl. 7:8)
139. Ninurta, Neo-Assyrian cylinder seal (Keel 1997b, fig. 45)
140. Ninurta, Neo-Assyrian cylinder seal (Moortgat-Correns 1988, fig. 5b)
141. Shooting a horned snake, seal impression, Ashur (Herbordt 1992, pl. 5:13)
142. Fight with horned snake, cylinder seal (Keel 1997b, fig. 48)
143. Fight with horned snake, cylinder seal (Keel 1992, fig. 244)



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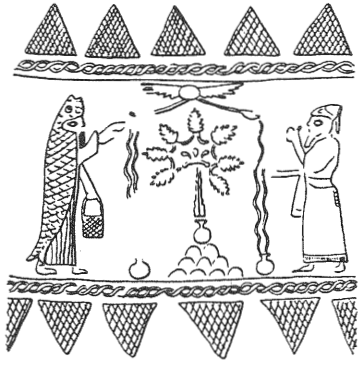

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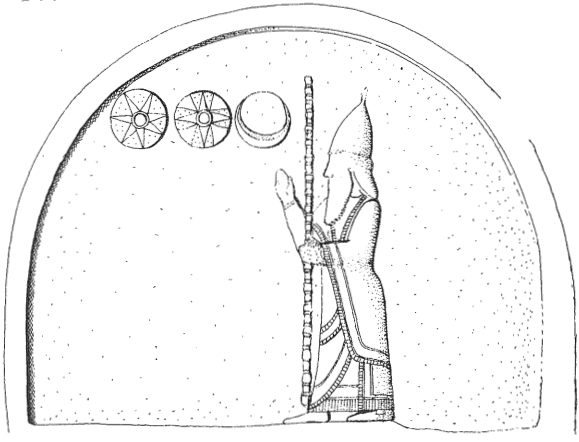

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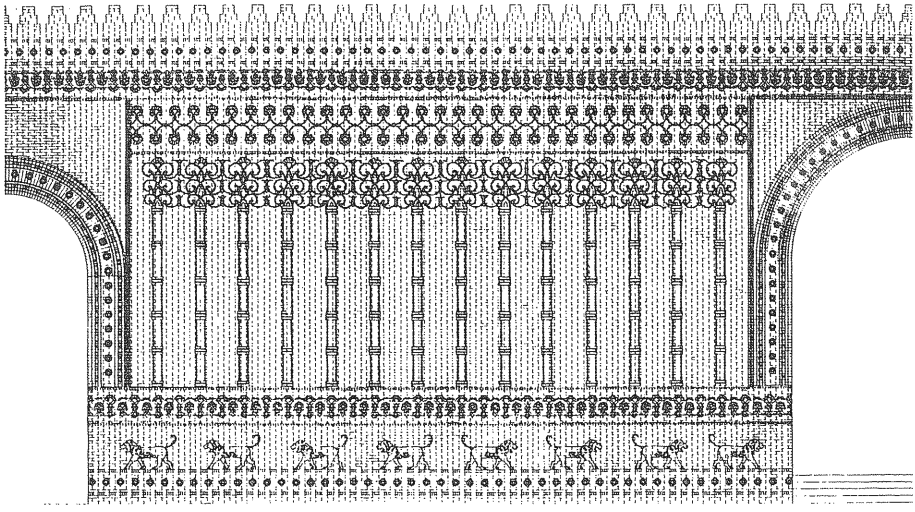
144. *Kudurru* of Marduk-apla-iddina II (after Jakob-Rost 1992, 109)
145. Nabonidus and celestial symbols, stela (Börker-Klähn 1982, no. 264a)
146. Babylonian tree-centred cylinder seal (Matthews 1990, no. 196)
147. Date-palm shoot and winged disc, stamp seal (Israel Museum 90.24.25)



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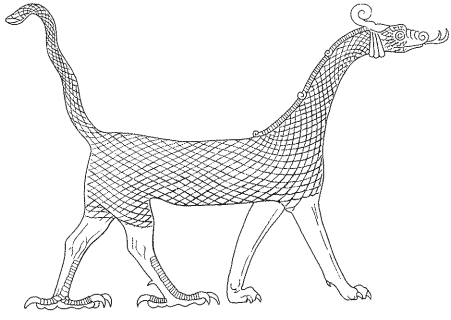

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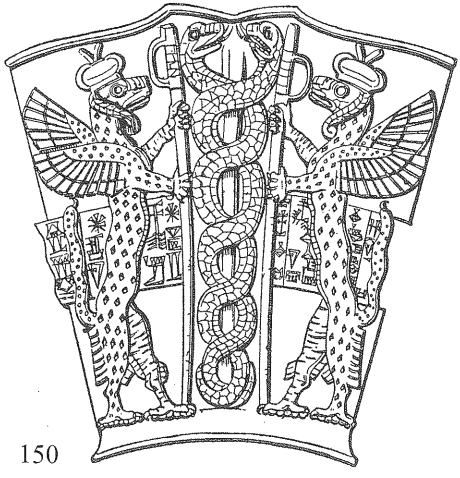
148. Façade of the Palace of Nebuchadnezzar II, Babylon (PKG, fig. 87)
149. *mušḫuššu*, Ishtar Gate, Babylon (Black and Green 1992, 166)
150. *mušḫuššu*, late third-millennium stone vessel (Frankfort 1939, fig. 33)



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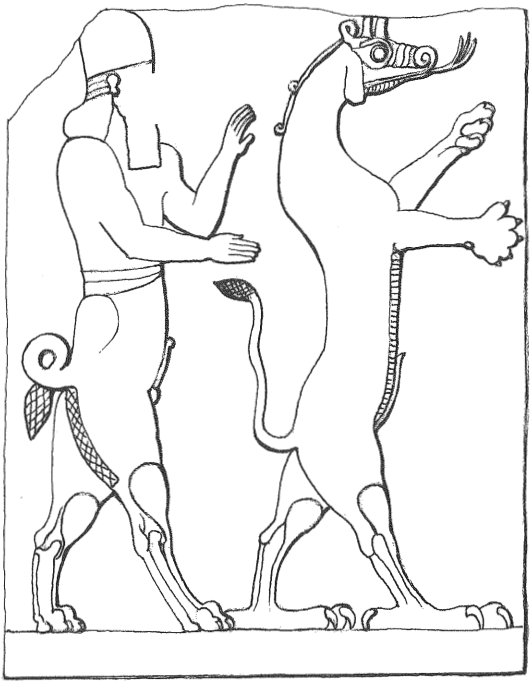

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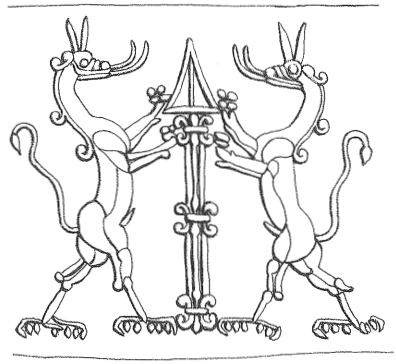

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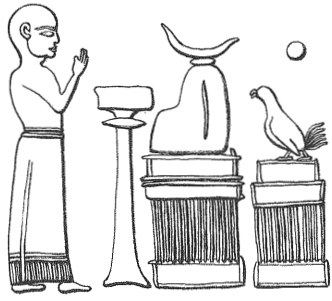

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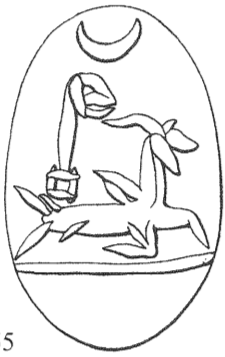
151. *mušḫuššu*, wall relief, North Palace, Nineveh (after Green 1985, pl. 14b)
152. *mušḫuššu*s flanking spade, Neo-Elemite cylinder seal (Israel Museum 65-261)
153. Symbols of Marduk and Nabu on *mušḫuššu*, Late Babylonian seal (Ornan 1995, fig. 4)
154. Worshipper before divine symbols, Late Babylonian cylinder seal (Israel Museum 65-258)



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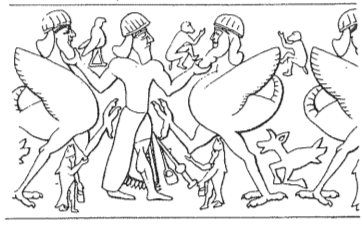

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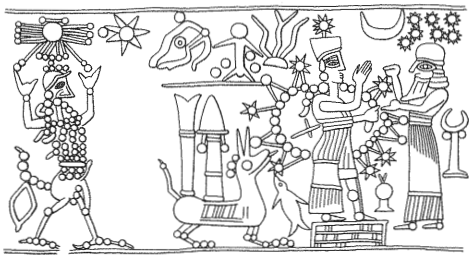
155. Goat-fish and the ram-headed sceptre, Late Babylonian seal (Israel Museum 65-368)
156. Star-topped lion-headed emblem, Late Babylonian impression, Uruk (Ehrenberg 1999, pl. 1:10)
157. Worshipper before the emblems of Marduk and Nabu, Late Babylonian impression, Uruk (Ehrenberg 1999, pl. 5:39)
158. Worshipper before dog, Late Babylonian impression, Uruk (Ehrenberg 1999, pl. 11:83)
159. Worshipper before lamp, Late Babylonian seal, Tell el-Mazar (Ornan 1993, no. 47)
160. Worshipper before rooster, Late Babylonian impression, Uruk (Ehrenberg 1999, pl. 10:74)
161. Figure subduing scorpion-bird-men, impression, Nimrud (Herbordt 1992, pl. 8:6)



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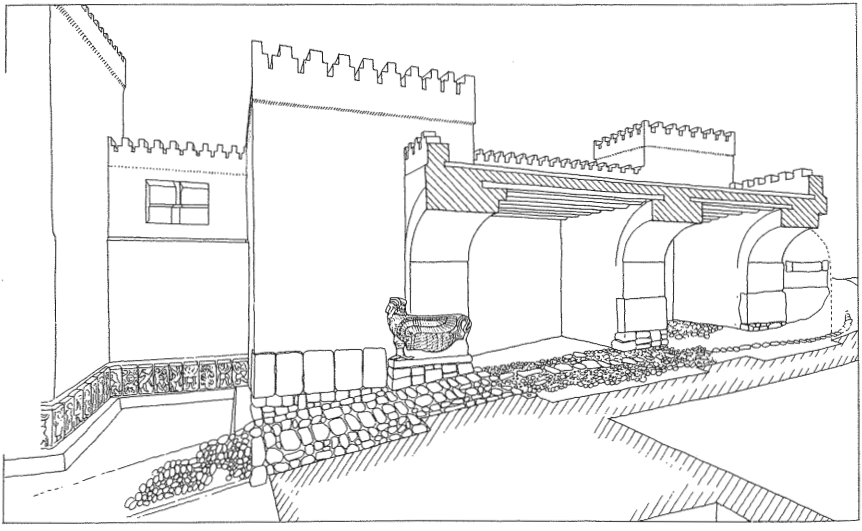

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162. Devotional scene and scorpion-hybrid, cylinder seal of Nisanna (Winter 1983, fig. 501)
163. Worshipper before scorpion-bird-man, Late Babylonian seal (Israel Museum 65-322)
164. Merman-like fish hybrid, Late Babylonian cylinder seal (after Porada 1948, no. 785)
165. Reconstructed entrance to the Kapara palace, Tell Halaf (Frankfort 1996, fig. 344)

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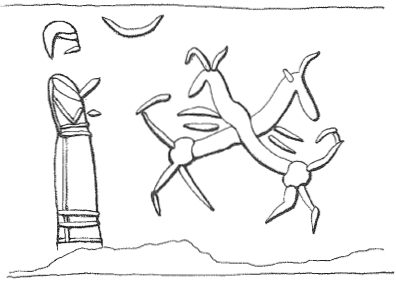

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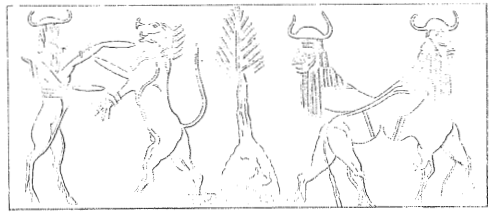

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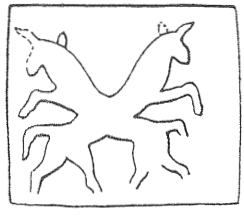

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166. Worshipper before lion-dragon, Neo-Elemite cylinder seal (de Miroschedji 1982, 58, no. 3)
167. Worshipper before fish-*apkallu*, Late Babylonian impression, Uruk (Ehrenberg 1999, pl. 9:68)
168. Worshipper before fish, Late Babylonian cylinder seal (Israel Museum 65-262)
169. Worshipper before crossed beasts, Late Babylonian cylinder seal (after von der Osten 1936, no. 123)
170. Crossed human-headed bulls, Akkadian cylinder seal (Collon 1982a, pl. 9 bottom)
171. Crossed ibexes, Middle Assyrian cylinder seal (Keel 1980b, fig. 88)
172. Crossed bulls, Late Babylonian brick, Babylon (Ornan 1997, fig. 211)

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173. The Banquet Stela, Nimrud (Börker-Klähn 1982, no. 137b)

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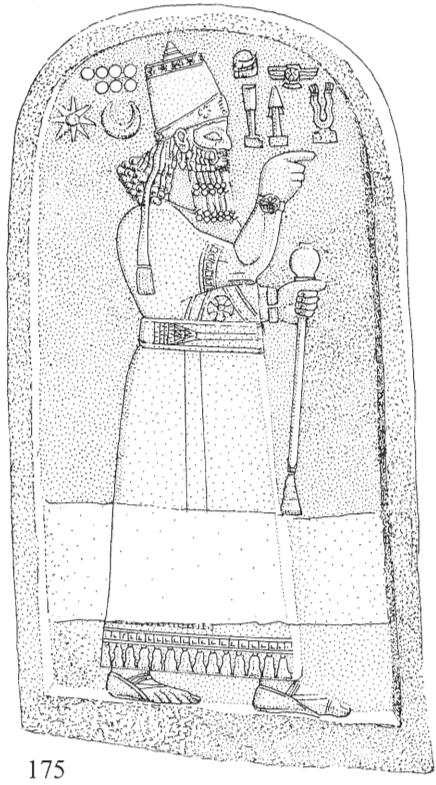

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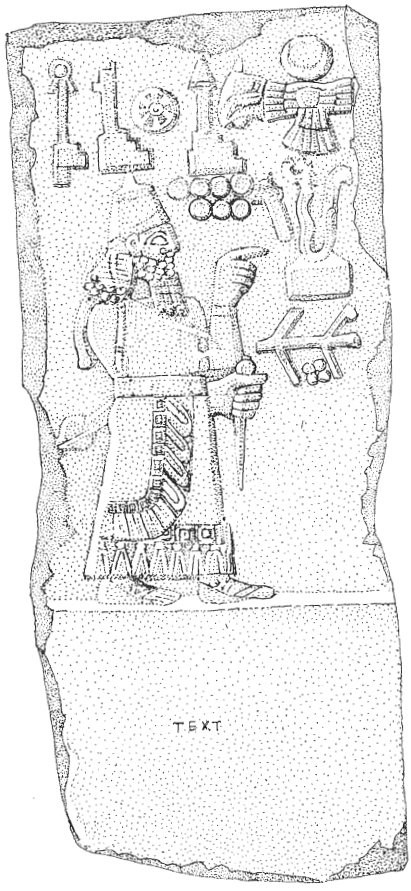
174. Stela of Shalmaneser III, Kurh (Börker-Klähn 1982, no. 148)
175. Stela of Adad-nirari III, Tell Rimah (Börker-Klähn 1982, no. 164)



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176. Stela of Adad-nirari III, Saba'a (Börker-Klähn 1982, no. 163)
177. Stela of Tiglath-pileser III, north-west Iran (Israel Museum 74.49.96)

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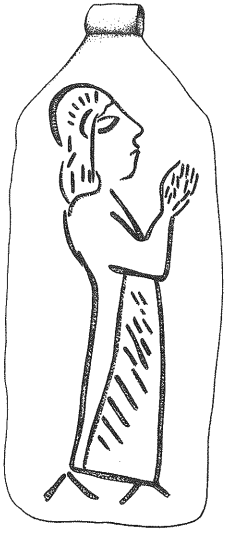

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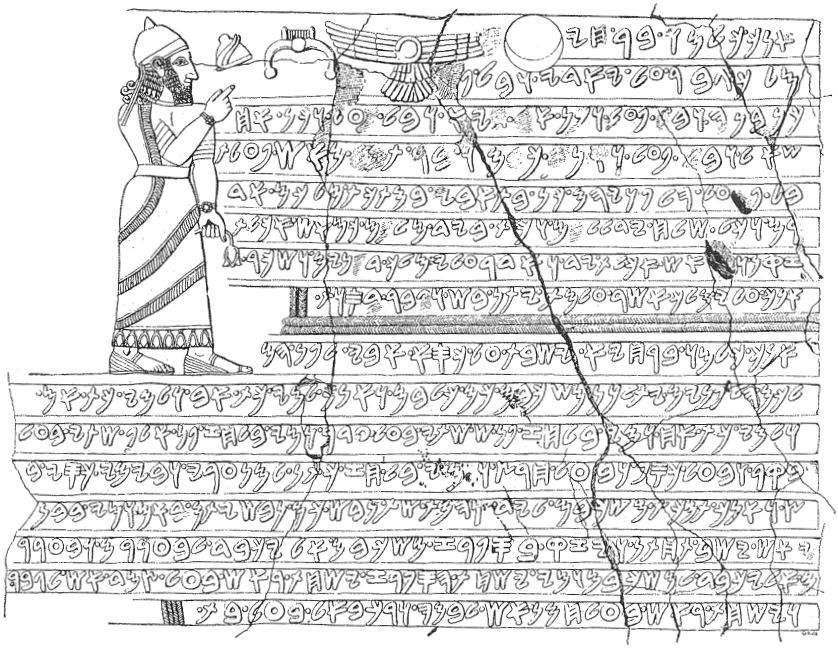
178. Worshipper, rock relief, Cudi Dağ (Nogaret 1985, fig. 2)
179. Stela of Mushezib-Shamash, Anaz (Börker-Klähn 1982, no. 233)
180. Worshipper, gold pendant, Nimrud (after Mallowan 1966, fig. 366)



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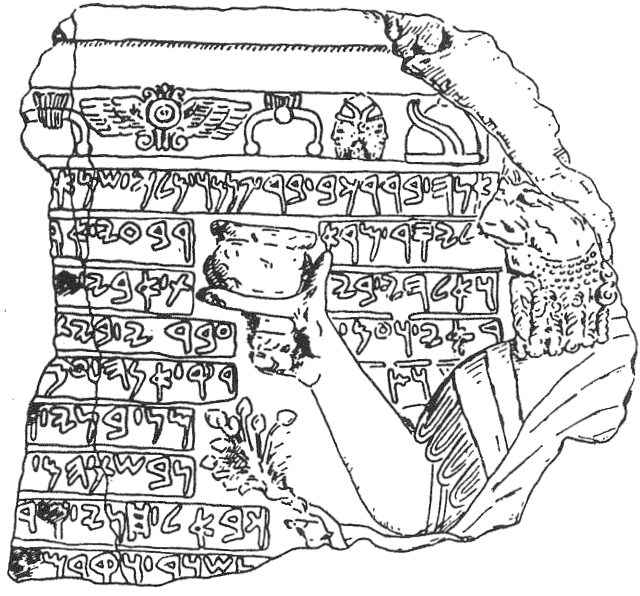

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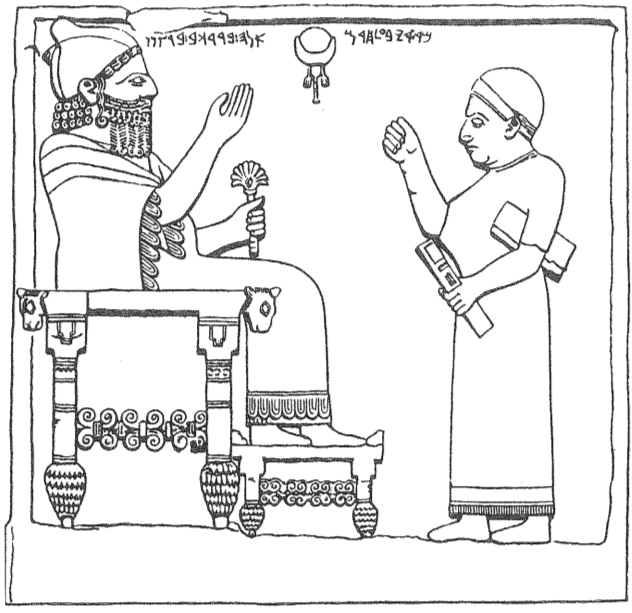
181. Kilamuwa and divine symbols, orthostat, Zinjirli (Bossert 1951, fig. 887)
182. Barrakib and symbols, orthostat, Zinjirli (Donner and Röllig 1968–69, III, pl. 12)



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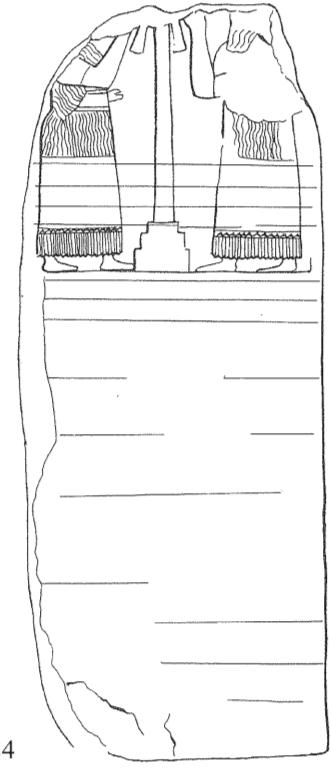
183. Barrakib, scribe and crescent-on-a-pole, orthostat, Zinjirli (Keel 1994, fig. 11)
184. Crescent-on-a-pole and worshippers, stela, Tavaleköyü Antakia (Keel 1994, fig. 7)
185. Crescent-on-a-pole and worshippers, Göktaçköyü (Keel 1994, fig. 8)



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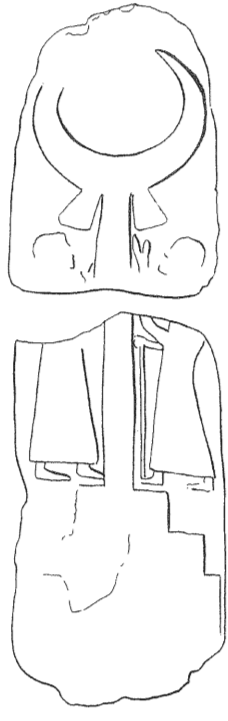

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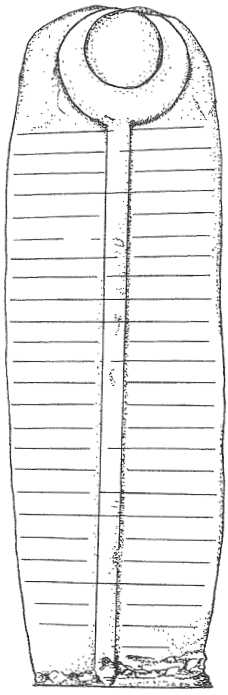

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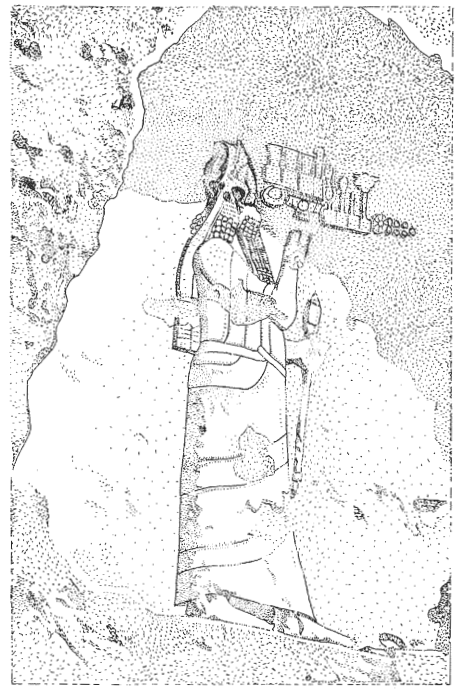

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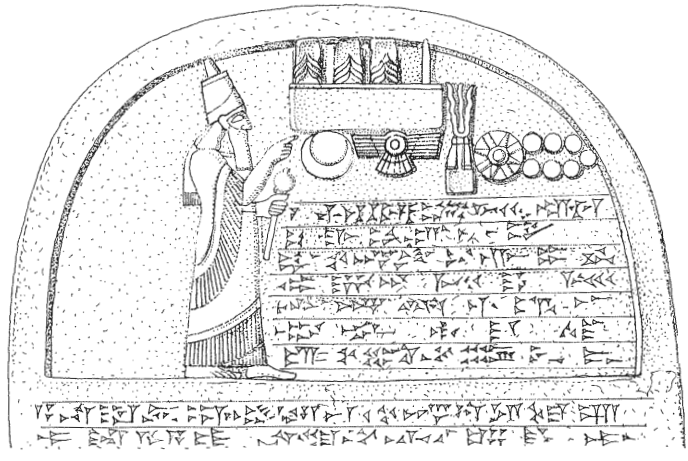

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186. Crescent-on-a-pole, Pazarcig (Keel 1994, fig. 3)
187. Sennacherib and divine symbols, rock relief, Bavian (Börker-Klähn 1982, no. 190)
188. Sennacherib and symbols, stela, Nineveh (Börker-Klähn 1982, no. 203)

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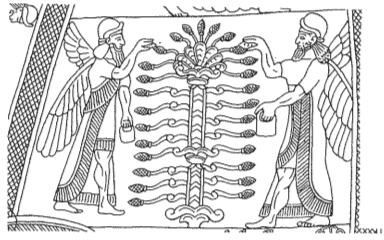

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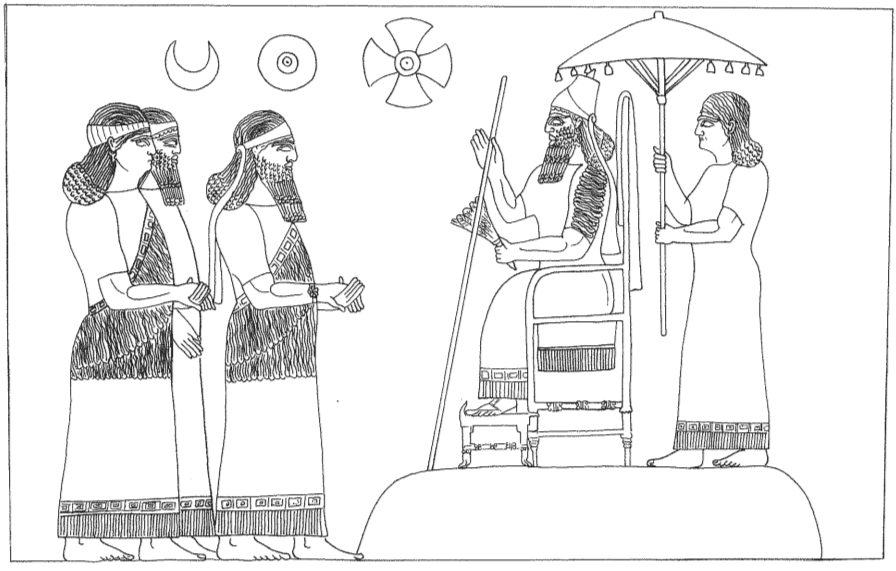

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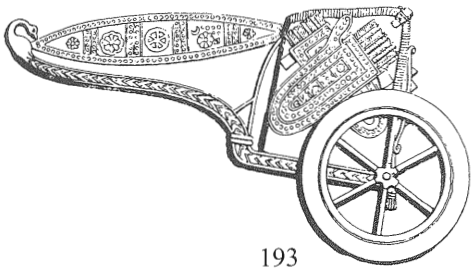
189. Decoration of royal garment on wall relief, North-West Palace, Nimrud (Canby 1971, fig. 3)
190. Bucket, wall relief, North-West Palace, Nimrud (Merhav 1975, fig. 1)
191. Decoration of royal garment, wall relief North-West Palace, Nimrud (Frankfort 1996, fig. 224)
192. Tiglath-pileser III and symbols, wall relief, Central Palace, Nimrud (after Barnett and Falkner 1962, pl. VIII)



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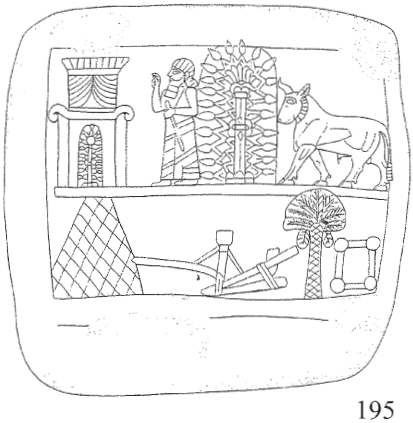

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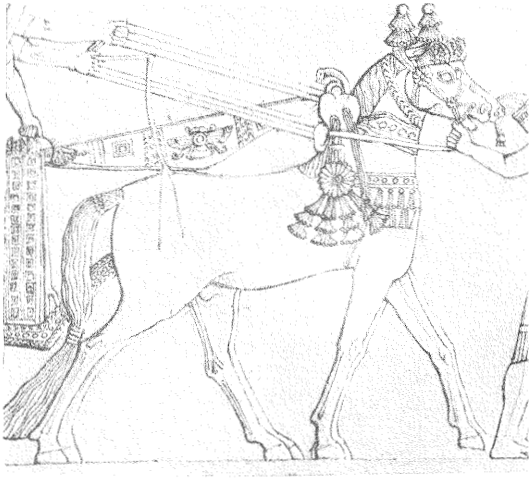

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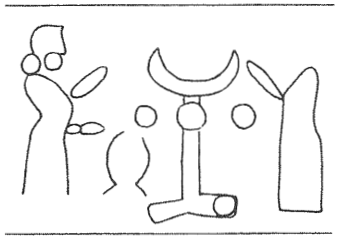

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193. Divine emblems on yoke-pole, wall relief, North-West Palace, Nimrud (Yadin 1963, 299)
194. Divine emblems on yoke-pole, wall relief, South-West Palace, Nimrud (Barnett and Falkner 1962, pl. LXVIII)
195. The Black Stone (Roaf and Zgoll 2001, fig. 1)
196. Crescent-on-a-pole, cylinder seal, Khorsabad (Keel 1980a, fig.91)
197. Crescent-on-a-pole, seal impression, Nineveh (Herbordt 1992, pl. 4:6)

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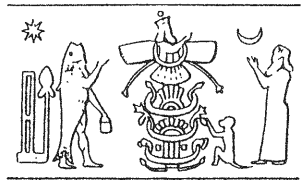

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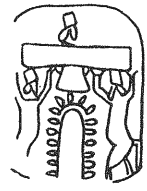

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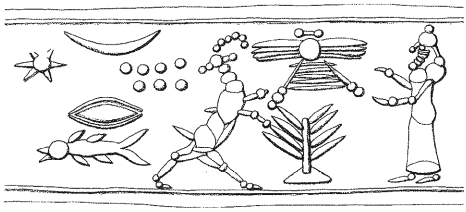

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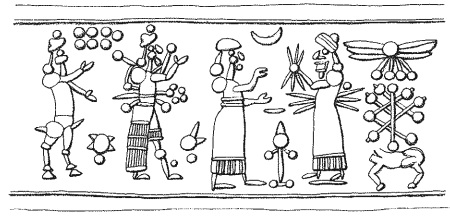

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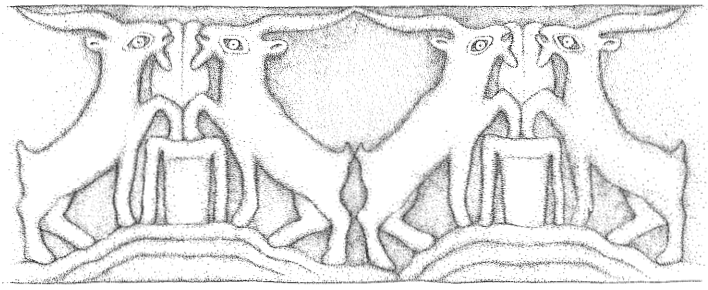
198. Crescent-on-a-pole, seal impression, Carchemish (Herbordt 1992, pl. 14:8)
199. Astral symbols, seal impression, Nineveh (Herbordt 1992, pl. 14:9)
200. Astral symbols, seal impression, Nimrud (Herbordt 1992, pl. 14:7)
201. Symbols of Marduk and Nabu, seal impression, Nimrud (Herbordt 1992, pl. 14:5)
202. Symbols of Marduk and Nabu, seal impression, Nimrud (Herbordt 1992, pl. 14:6)
203. Adoration of scorpion, seal impression, Nimrud (Herbordt 1992, pl. 20:4)
204. Adoration of palmate tree and winged disc, seal impression, Nimrud (Herbordt 1992, pl. 3:1)
205. Winged disc, tree and bull-men, seal impression, Nineveh (Herbordt 1992, pl. 13:2)
206. Emblems of Marduk and Nabu with bull-men, seal impression, Nimrud (Herbordt 1992, pl. 13:5)
207. Adoration of tree with ibex, cylinder seal (after Porada 1948, no. 707)
208. God with lightning fork and tree mounted on ibex, cylinder seal (after Porada 1948, no. 697)



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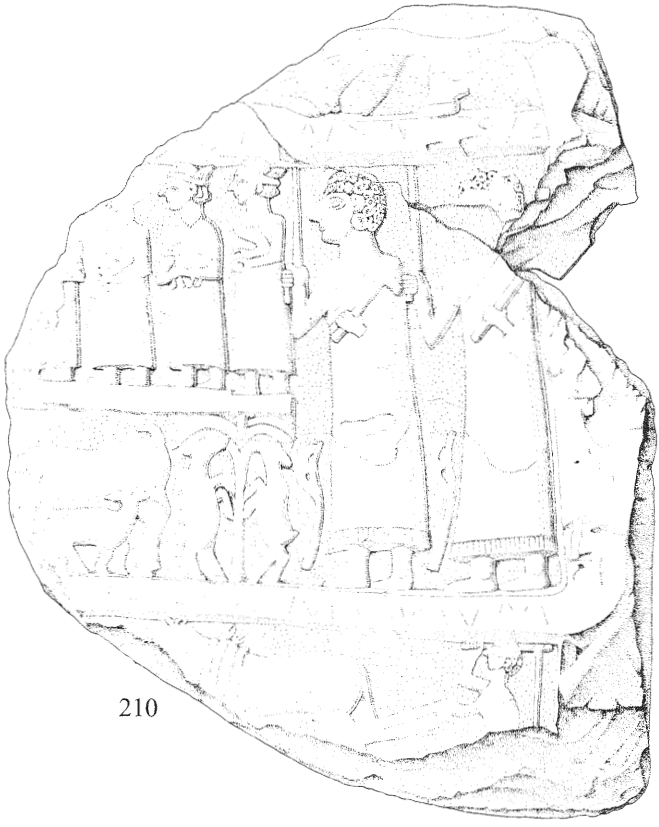

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209. Middle Assyrian relief vase (Israel Museum)
210. Old Akkadian stela, Halawa (after Orthmann 1989, 75, fig. 44)
211. Adoration of griffin with astral symbols, stamp seal, Gezer (Ornan 1997, no. 55)

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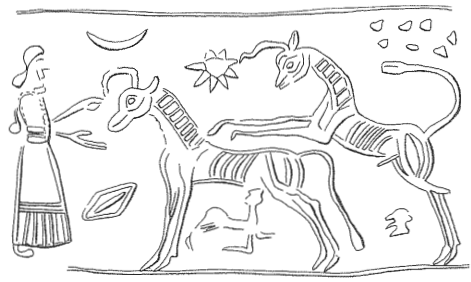

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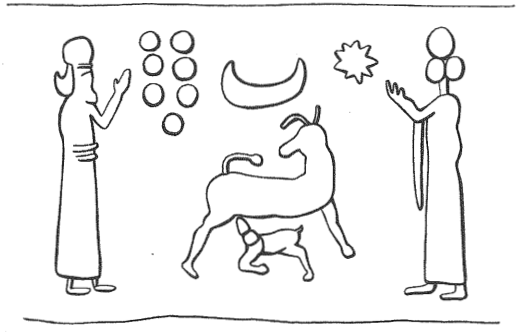

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212. Adoration of copulating animals, cylinder seal (Keel 1980b, fig. 101)
213. Adoration of copulating animals, cylinder seal (Keel 1980b, fig. 102)
214. Suckling cow and rosette, stamp seal (after Buchanan and Moorey 1988, no. 324)
215. Suckling cow as focus of worship, cylinder seal (after Collon 2001, no. 219)

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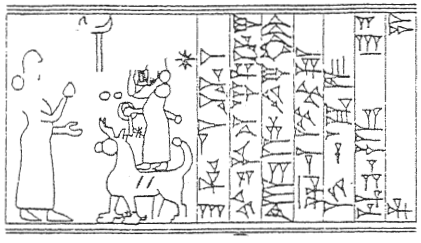

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216. Goddess on suckling cow, cylinder seal of Elamar (Sass and Uehlinger 1993, 77, fig. 6)
217. Storm god on suckling cow, cylinder seal (Keel 1980b, fig. 99)
218. God on lion hybrid and crescent-on-a-pole, seal impression, Nimrud (Herbordt 1992, pl. 1:1)

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219. Demons flanking crescent-on-a-pole, seal impression (Herbordt 1992, pl. 4:3)
220. Adoration of crescent-on-a-pole, prism-shaped seal (Ornan 1997, fig. 167)

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Summary

This book analyzes the history of Mesopotamian imagery from the mid-second to mid-first millennium BCE. It demonstrates that in spite of rich textual evidence, which grants the Mesopotamian gods and goddesses an anthropomorphic form, there was a clear abstention in various media from visualizing the gods in such a form. True, divine human-shaped cultic images existed in Mesopotamian temples. But as a rule, non-anthropomorphic visual agents such as inanimate objects, animals or fantastic hybrids replaced these figures when they were portrayed outside of their sacred enclosures. This tendency reached its peak in first-millennium Babylonia and Assyria. The removal of the Mesopotamian human-shaped deity from pictorial renderings resembles the Biblical agenda not only in its avoidance of displaying a divine image but also in the implied dual perception of the divine: according to the Bible and the Assyro-Babylonian concept the divine was conceived as having a human form; yet in both cases anthropomorphism was also concealed or rejected, though to a different degree.

In the present book, this dual approach toward the divine image is considered as a reflection of two associated rather than contradictory religious worldviews. The plausible consolidation of the relevant Biblical accounts just before the Babylonian Exile or, more probably within the Exile - in both cases during a period of strong Assyrian and Babylonian hegemony – points to a direct correspondence between comparable religious phenomena.

It is suggested that far from their homeland and in the absence of a temple for their god, the Judahite deportees adopted and intensified the Mesopotamian avoidance of anthropomorphic pictorial portrayals of deities. While the Babylonian representations remained confined to temples, the exiles would have turned a cultic reality – i.e., the non-written Babylonian custom – into a written, articulated law that explicitly forbade the pictorial representation of God.